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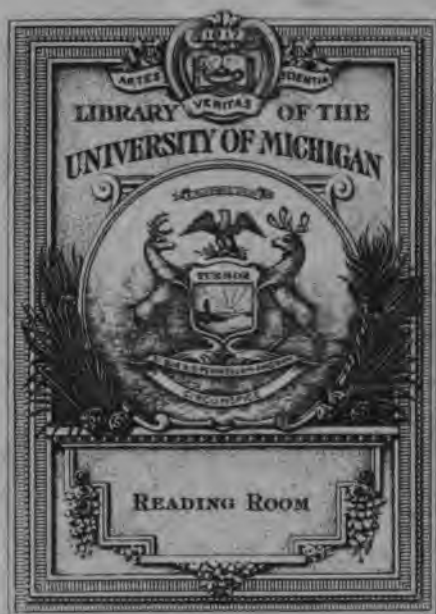
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GREAT MODERN
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**COMPILED AND EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION**

**BY
WILLARD HUNTINGTON WRIGHT,**

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To JAMES GIBBONS HUNEKER

**Who has done more than any other critic
in making known to America
the best literature of
modern Europe.**

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INTRODUCTION

THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN FRENCH FICTION

By WILLARD HUNTINGTON WRIGHT

IN the eighteenth century French literature, like French painting, comprised many divergent tendencies. Nevertheless, all the writers of that period had in common a quality which bound them together and anchored them to their age. This quality was one of process, and had a perfect counterpart in the French painting of the same epoch. There were more or less set forms to which every writer adhered with some degree of restriction. The academy, in this case actually non-existent, though hypothetically very strict, placed its limitation upon all the books of the age. Evidences of technical, if not stylistic, imitation abounded; precedent played a large part in the novelist's conception of his work; and although here and there, where the individual possessed sufficient genius to be conscious of his own powers, arbitrary laws of structure were occasionally broken, it was not until the so-called Romantic Movement that the classic limitations of form were definitely done away with.

In Rousseau came the first indications of this emancipation. It was the "Nouvelle Héloïse" and "Émile" which disrupted the French literature of the eighteenth century, and indicated the trend of the nineteenth. With Rousseau individualism appeared abruptly in the midst of literary formalities; and from that day to the present the artificialities of classicism have not successfully reappeared. Although Marivaux purified the novel in so far as he relieved it of all polemical considerations and made of it a thing of recreation and amusement without resorting to travesty or satire, Rousseau infused a new spirit into fiction and opened up

that naturalistic vista the end of which has not yet been reached.

After 1790 there was a hiatus in French fiction save for the works of Mme. De Staël and Chateaubriand. These two writers stood so conspicuously above their contemporaries that one might write a history of the development of French letters without mentioning any other names during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. A great number of minor poets sprang into being, but with the exception of Chénier no others were of any importance till the advent of Béranger and Lamartine; and the novel was almost exclusively in the hands of such writers as Fiévée, de Maistre and Constant.

Mme. de Staël, however, had much to do with the liberalizing of French letters. On the formal and æsthetic side of literature her influence was nugatory, but she reacted in a salutary manner against the cramping restrictions of the purely classic viewpoint. She brought new, if borrowed, ideas to the novel; she broadened its outlook; and she awakened in the younger generation of writers a spirit of freedom and intrepidity. It was the fecundity of her thought which enriched all the serious fiction writing which followed her. Her "Delphine" and "Corinne," though scarcely read today, played very much the same part in the development of French fiction that the works of Richter and Goethe played in the development of German fiction. The novel became a medium not for æsthetic form but for æsthetic ideas. In her the literature of her country donned the garb of cosmopolitanism.

Chateaubriand, to the contrary, had an influence which was largely æsthetic. The "properties" of fiction were markedly developed by him. He used the manifestations of life as the vehicle for an artistic expression. He even brought the pomp of the Christian religion back into the novel; but with him it was used purely as a medium, just as he used nature as a means for obtaining color. He saw in Christianity not doctrine but poetry, and its beauty to him was largely the beauty of antiquity. It supplied him with a variegated source of literary splendor, and his style

gave added richness to the French language. Chateaubriand developed the French novel in direct line with Rousseau's naturalism, and was one of the stepping-stones between Rousseau and that later school which has been called the Romanticists. Chateaubriand was in fact the father of that school. The younger men, no longer temperamentally in harmony with classic stiffness, saw in him an exalted artistic ideal worthy of emulation. Sand, Victor Hugo, De Vigny, and Flaubert patterned their literary edifices in accord with his designs.

Mme. de Staël and Chateaubriand, representing the two complementary phases of literary art, were the precursors of the new literature. The former gave young France its modern point of view, its freedom from conventional processes of thought, and the courage to attack life with independence. The latter gave young France the consciousness of imaginative artistry, and its first purely æsthetic conceptions.

The work of Mme. de Staël and Chateaubriand, together with that of Rousseau, contained the germ of modern realism. Once their influence took hold, the spirit of dissatisfaction, unrest and revolt began to spread among practically all the writers of the younger generation. The new ideal was rushing rapidly toward a climax. Poetry was the first form of literature which definitely established the revolution, although signs of it had been detected in periodical literature. *La Muse Française* was the forum of the new men, and its contributions had many illustrious names signed to them. Popular feeling also changed. A few belated classicists clung tenaciously to the dying ideals of the past, but their works were lost in the torrential onrush of liberated youth. French genius had already broken down the academic boundaries and was heading madly into new fields. The movement was not wholly French, however. Other nations took a hand in it. Walter Scott was a vital factor in the revolt. He was read extensively and imitated in France. Byron also took part in the new iconoclasm. Germany, too, contributed to the upheaval, largely through the good offices of Mme. de Staël, who constituted herself

the interpreter of German thought and fashions as impressed upon her by Wilhelm Schlegel.

The first indirect though definite statement of the school's aims appeared in the fancifully sentimental works of the voluminous Nodier. His importance today is mainly historical, for despite his versatility he achieved nothing of the first order. Béranger and Lamartine bridged the two shores. Neither of these poets were full members of the Romantic school. With one hand they held to the past while with the other they reached out for the new. Béranger especially belonged to the passing régime, and though he had no influence, one cannot overlook him in studying the evolution of French poetry. Lamartine, far more individualistic, founded his verse on de Staël and Chateaubriand, but he was too firmly wed to classic form to wield any great power in the movement. His "Méditations" and "Harmonies" helped to awaken the new spirit; and later his "Jocelyn" and "La Chute d'un Ange" brought him still closer in touch with the broadening vision of his contemporaries.

The movement was crystalized, however, in the *clénacle* which comprised Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Vigny, Nerval, the Deschamps brothers, Gautier, Borel, and Lamartine. Hugo was the outstanding figure among them, and his "Hernani," which appeared in 1830, epitomized the fermentation. Hugo led the movement in its early stages, and it was his influence which gave it much of its generating power. He showed it the way in poetry, drama and fiction. Because of his versatility and genius he is regarded as the embodiment of all the factors of the school, but he was, in fact, only one of the manifestations of the emancipation in French letters. On the purely æsthetic side he was deficient. He constantly sacrificed form for matter, and he lacked that intellectual consciosity which is as necessary to great art as is either emotionalism or sensuousness. Furthermore, he was too deeply concerned with the grandiose to develop that *finesse* and *sensibilité* which were emphasized in other men of the movement. Hugo nevertheless, because of his colossal imagination, expressed the *spirit* of the movement with greater comprehensiveness and power than did any of his

confrères. He disregarded all classical formulæ; he mobilized the diction of the novel; and he had much to do in making arbitrary the selection of subject-matter.

Alexandre Dumas *père*, worked along lines similar to those of Hugo; and his contributions to the new movement in reality complemented Hugo's. Much of his work was not actually written by himself. He no doubt revised and corrected it, but it would be almost a physical impossibility for any one man to have produced the enormous amount of fiction which bears Dumas' name. However, there are certain books which are unmistakably his. They are full of color and vigor, and they reveal a hand highly skilled in the labor of his craft. Hugo wrote few short stories, and these—such as "Claude Gueux"—are not representative of him. Furthermore, it is impossible to select from the main body of his writings extracts which in themselves are complete from a short-story standpoint. Dumas, however, had much of the *conte* writer's temperament, and it is possible therefore that he had a greater influence on the short story, as an art form, than did Hugo. In any event—so similar in attitude was the work of these two men—that we are able, by referring to the writings of either one, to determine their specific contribution to the evolution of French fiction.

Alfred de Vigny struck another note. His development was more in line with Lamartine's than with Hugo's, and his influence in the liberation of the meditative side of subject-matter was of vital importance. A much later school, comprising such men as Mallarmé, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Viélé-Griffin, Stuart Merrill, Moréas, Léon Lierx and Samain, owed much of its "philosophy" to him. Vigny's nature was pessimistic and he regarded life in a far more intimate fashion than did Hugo. His style, however, was colder and more severe. In his stories and novels as well as in his verse one occasionally feels that the correctness of diction was his primary concern, and as a result he was perhaps the most perfect stylist of his period.

Both Vigny and Lamartine, especially the latter, had intellectual affinities with the past. Alfred de Musset, however, succumbed wholly to the new tendencies; and yet,

despite the wide influence of Hugo, he remained almost entirely aloof from the imitation which characterized the work of others in the movement. In him was more realism of theme than in Hugo. He cared little for form in its æsthetic sense, and could have said, with the Impressionists, that he created *comme l'oiseau chante*. He felt things keenly; he saw life through his sensitivity; and his nature, given to excesses, was sufficiently reckless to produce books which, through their sheer emotional power, gave much impetus to the tide of realism. He dealt in the solidities of literature, for he understood the building up of character; and he could present an episode in such a way as to give it depth and breadth. His first principal book, "Les Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie," prefigured the thematism of Zola. In this work, as in later ones, enthusiasm and unbridled youth were the most conspicuous traits. But just such a sweeping revolt was necessary at the time. That he later lost his fiery courage did not militate against his earlier power. Classicism was dead. Even Ponsard's "Lucrèce" in 1846 was but a transient resuscitation of the corpse.

Directly opposed to Musset was Théophile Gautier. Gautier laid almost complete stress on means. To him surface form was all-important. He was the lapidary of the movement and, as such, contributed to it a most necessary quality. From the standpoint of technical perfection his poems outrank those of any of his fellows. Language to him was a plastic medium which it was his aim to mould into precise and exquisite shapes. So completely did he sacrifice all substance to form that he never attained more than two dimensions. He produced a flat, pleasing surface with a beautiful texture,—his works are like sensuous and colorful posters. But it was important that these qualities should have been developed, for masses, no matter how solid, cannot exist in the highest art unless organized by line and by the subtleties of formal relationships. Gautier, the pre-eminent craftsman, the master manipulator of words and phrases, was the literary complement of Musset.

The "Romantic" school was a widespread uprising against the literary conventions of tradition. The older classic cycle

of letters had attained its florescence, and during the eighteenth century it had rapidly gone to seed. After a period of fructification the new era was born. It was a renaissance, like that which came to painting at about the same time; and, as in the case of all new cycles, it took on the character of an upheaval. The men of the movement of 1830 were the pioneers of the modern age. Only in their spirit of modernity were they related. To consider them as a group, and not as individuals, is to lose sight of the underlying significance of their work and to misunderstand the part they played in the evolution of literary history.

In Hugo, Dumas, Vigny, Musset and Gautier were summed up the school's immediate tendencies. Hugo pointed the way in all departments. Dumas helped make possible an imaginative eclecticism. Vigny, primarily a thinker, developed and preserved the intellectualism of the movement. Musset was its unordered force. Gautier confined himself to the technical niceties of expression. Each one, though, was guided by the same aims; each one was influenced by the modern mental attitude; each one was a phase of the reaction against classic limitations and an exponent of the dominating individualism of the new century.

But as yet this movement had possessed no emancipator of subject-matter. Hugo and Dumas still clung to imaginative document, and it was from this document that the school acquired its name. It was inevitable, however, that historical romance should have furnished the first materials of an æsthetic renovation, for it gave free rein to selection and invention, and its scope was unlimited. But the very choice of such arbitrary material was an indication, not of a romantic tendency, but of the spirit of modern realism. That which drove the new men into revolt was the feeling that the classic forms were false to life. They desired a wholly unrestricted hand in the statement of their art. The rigid formalities of the past no longer satisfied their craving for expression; and they demanded a method in keeping with life itself—a method related to the changing, moving, metamorphosing world of action and emotion of which they were part and to which they felt their genius allied. They be-

lieved that art and life should no longer be divorced. Therefore, their battle against restraint was the battle for realism in art; and in order to fight that battle most effectively they chose the subject-matter which would permit them the greatest freedom—the subject-matter, in short, which stood for the very lack of restraint for which their methods were to strive. Once the battle had been won, once the new methods had been vindicated, then the document itself would become closely related to realistic life.

Subject-matter, as well as methods, must pass through a process of emancipation; and it was not until *Standhal* and Sand entered the ranks of literature that the last phase of realism in France was achieved.

George Sand's work embodies many characteristics. In it there were undeniable affiliations with Hugo's and Dumas' thematic romanticism. There was also the unrestrained emotionalism of Musset. Even the analytic tendencies of Vigny found a place in her writings. But, in addition to these influences, there was an individual quality which was to have far-reaching effects. Her life was varied and tumultuous, and her work, a direct outcome—a record almost—of her experiences, not only ran the emotional gamut but served as a vehicle for her introspective contemplations. Her books were always inherently personal: they reflected the mood of the moment; and it was this very concern with a segment of actual material existence—the segment of which she was a part—that went far toward shunting the new realism of means from its romantic subject-matter and turning it upon the track of documentary immediacy.

Sand's earlier novels—"Valentine," "Jacques," "Lelia," "Leone Leoni" and "Mauprat"—are little more than fictional accounts of her physical and intellectual experiences. Historically they are without special significance, save only as they foreshadowed the work which followed. "Jacques" had a tremendous influence, extending even into Germany; but the novels which owe their inspiration to it are largely the by-products of fictional history. Not until the appearance of "*La Mare au Diable*," "*La Petite Fadette*" and "*Les Maîtres Sonneurs*" did George Sand take her place in the

evolution of modern literature. These realistic books, though idyllic and unpretentious, lacking complicated situations, and breathing a somewhat simple pastoral atmosphere, were her permanent contributions to the movement. They constituted a new step toward natural observation. Her later works, such as "*Mlle. la Quintinie*," "*Mlle. Merquem*," and "*Jean de la Roche*," were more sophisticated, less natural in their episodic development; and while they showed a keener and maturer grasp on character and more deft handling of materials, they possess also a penchant for dramatic artificialities, which detracts from the purer, if simpler, realism of her earlier writings. It was, however, this realism which gave her the position she held in the development of letters. When her final books were being written that development had passed on into stronger hands.

Stendhal holds a dual position in the history of the modern novel. Not only was he the forerunner of the naturalism of Zola, but he was also the father of that branch of literary naturalism which we have come to call the "psychological" novel, and which received its first telling impetus in France in the works of Bourget. It is difficult to say which position gave him the greater influence. Balzac studied him assiduously, just as nearly half a century later a new group of novelists, turning from Zolaism, based an important school on his methods. But, for the present, Stendhal must be considered in his relation to the early realism of the nineteenth century, which reached its highest point in Balzac. To this realism he contributed a vital asset, and by supplying the one necessary element which was still lacking in the 1830 movement, he made possible the splendid florescence in the "*Comédie Humaine*." Without Stendhal's quota there would still have been a phase of literary methods unexplored; and until that pioneer work was accomplished there could be no consummation.

Stendhal's early critical works, especially his strange and fascinating analysis of love, "*De l'Amour*," allied him with the new movement; but it was not until the publication of his first novel, "*Armance*," in 1827, that his alliance became significant. This was the first book of the realists in which

analysis and observation were cardinal qualities. In fact, the attitude in this novel was new in fiction; and the meticulous manner of its presentation was as revolutionary as its document. "Armance" was the undoubted forerunner of Balzac's "Scenes of Parisian Life"; and the photographic details of the intellectual antipathy between the hero and the heroine had much to do with a still later school of letters. "Le Rouge et le Noir," appearing five years later, went still further in emphasizing realism in subject-matter. If we ignore the promise of Stendhal's unfinished novel, "Le Chasseur Vert," there can be no question that "Le Rouge et le Noir" is the greatest of his works. Certainly it was the most influential. It was not widely read, and few critics noticed its eccentric creator; but many writers studied it, and in time Stendhal's subterranean fame spread among all serious modern authors.

Wherein Stendhal actually differed from his predecessors was only in his mental attitude. His characters were not drawn imaginatively, but grew slowly out of a mass of intimate psychological analyses. His examinations were frank and not seldom introspective. He was constantly probing for motives; and his viewpoint was sometimes bitter and cynical, sometimes morbid, but always modern. What he achieved rounded out the researches of the new realists; and, although his analyses were confined exclusively to types and to rare individuals, they nevertheless formed the basis of much of the literature that followed. Stendhal was as much a part of the so-called Romantic school as any other writer of his time. Because he made new experiments in document, whereas others experimented in means, he has suffered an enforced isolation.

Balzac, quite to the contrary, was not an innovator, save in the narrowest sense. His supposed romanticism was a direct growth, along consciously selective lines, from the works of the earlier realists of the nineteenth century. His so-called naturalism can be traced to Rousseau, Sand and others. His "psychology" and his reverence for details were a gift from Stendhal. His technical means were merely the sorted and rearranged methods of the numerous iconoclasts

who reacted against the restrictions of classicism. Mme. de Staël gave him his cosmopolitanism; and his artistic temper was not unrelated to Chateaubriand's. Profiting by all these factors of freedom, he was at once the epitome of the contemporary cycle and the link which joined the older composition to the new procedure. His works were as perfect, from the standpoint of æsthetic form, as were the liberated ones of his own age. He restated the old in terms of the new.

Balzac, like every impelling artist, stood between the two antipathies of intellect and emotion, and combined them by his will. There have been few writers with greater *sensibilité*; and, at the same time, there have been few more purely impersonal workers. It may be said that he organized the physical world—with its passions, hopes, struggles, aspirations and desires—into abstractions of form. But all this emotional upheaval, this gigantic welter of human impulses, this blind mingling of instinct and sacrifice and ambition, represents only the material wherewith Balzac's massive structures were fabricated. The actual task of construction was accomplished by a process of conscious selecting, rejecting, changing and rearranging in accord with an organic æsthetic plan. He revised with the utmost care, at times rewriting whole sections of his books after they were in proof. His prodigious corrective labors have few parallels in literary history. Even the external evidence points to the fact that his primary concern was organization.

But despite the calculating, almost clinical, precision of his literary method, he retained the virile reality of his medium. His conception of form was not that of a mould into which the document was to be poured: to him form was the plastic and indivisible unity of shape and substance, the one growing out of, and being identical with, the other—the unique presentation of every element in his art. It was this conception which made him the master workman and permitted him to portray at one and the same time the living life of actuality and the universal significance of life. And it was this conception which conferred upon his best books an æsthetic worth over and beyond any exhibitory value.

It has been truly said that even Balzac's minor characters have genius—that is, that they are intensely real, expressive of manifest truth, and alive with recognizable solidity. And the reason that it is true is that Balzac, capable of interpreting philosophically what he observed, had sufficient power and insight to take nature and not merely the illusion of nature as his model. He first established a terrain and enclosed it with atmosphere; and the creatures who sprang from this soil created certain unescapable social, economic and intellectual conditions. Moreover, the generations of characters which came afterward were, in turn, the direct offsprings of this later environment, influenced by all that preceded them, and influencing those who followed.

The events in Balzac's books follow no artificial schedule, are based on no rigid literary logic, and occur at no stated intervals in response to the requirements of surface rhythm. The rhythm in Balzac is not the rise and fall of effects, but the slow swelling and recession of causative undercurrents. His climaxes of interests are the foci of forces; and the completion of his form may come in the midst of tragedy, at the dawn of happiness, or at a point where the plot, regarded conventionally, is incomplete. The usual devisions of sentimental interest are not to be found in his books. The story ends only when some cycle of inner energy has been exhausted. This is why Balzac is seldom trivially entertaining. His appeal is intellectual as well as emotional; and unless one is chiefly interested in motives, the exterior of his work will appear amorphous. But, in reality he is the great modern master of literary form, and his heritage, if understood and assimilated, should indicate the literary pathway of the future.

Mérimée marked the transition between realism and naturalism. He was contemporary with the early realists of the nineteenth century, but although he had many temperamental affinities with them, he never became one of their number. He studied and worked independently, and thus avoided the tyranny of any fixed literary principle. His nature was not such that would have permitted of a consuming enthusiasm. He was less passionate in the physical

and emotional sense, and more passionate in the intellectual sense, than any one of those writers who were called Romanticists. Consequently his avidity for knowledge precluded adherence to one ideal; and we find in his work many tendencies and many diverse inspirations. Sand, Stendhal, Gautier, Balzac, George Borrow, Rabelais, Turgenev and even Crébillon contributed to his writings—some indirectly, being merely intellectual appeals; others directly, dictating his selection of theme and coloring his point of view.

In nearly all his stories there is the tincture of pessimism and disillusion. Mérimée is never sentimental; his feelings never obtrude. He is interested in man as a highly sensitive and complex mechanism; and his powerful anti-democratic instincts, resulting in an ironical and often cruel attitude toward humanity, render him wholly indifferent in his analyses and dissections. His contempt is the calm and detached disdain of a man sufficiently secure in his own superiority to regard the world with complete impersonality. There is no passion in his hate, only a mild and aristocratic scorn. Many of his tales are fraught with a grisly horror which is entirely divorced from any consideration for either his characters or the reader. Moreover, he has produced several important realistic stories which, though having unfamiliar *mises en scène*, carry the utmost conviction. "Colomba," "Matteo Falcone" and "Carmen,"—the first two Corsican, the last Spanish—revisualize for us phases of life which we cannot help feeling are at least accurate. Their authenticity is unescapable.

Mérimée's ability to fuse life into alien *milieus* is due largely to his ability to sever his intimate convictions from his work. He was a painstaking student of history and archæology, was an inspector-general of historical monuments, and also held delicate diplomatic posts. These influences tended to emphasize the impersonality of his nature; and in his writings it was inevitable that this characteristic should assert itself. He was, above all, an artist in the narrower sense of the word. He had a remarkable faculty for memorable imagery; he possessed a fluent and colorful, though severe,

diction; and he had a sure instinct for compositional balance, although he never attained to structural solidity. To the very last there was in him something of the dilettante. One feels that he was never willing to make the supreme sacrifice to art—the sacrifice which implies absolute reverence, and which is required of all who would achieve supremacy.

At the advent of Flaubert no problems of realism remained to occupy the writer's attention. The new methods had been firmly established: individual instincts were the only laws of expression. All thematic restrictions had been done away with; the novelist could treat of *n'importe quoi*. Classic composition had been reintroduced into literature by Balzac, who had thus drawn the old and the new together and enunciated their fundamental relationship. Mérimée, by cultivating a scientific and impersonal attitude toward the materials of fiction, had removed the obstacle of sentiment which stood in the way of minute diagnosis. The potentialities of realism had all been actualized. To have continued along the same path would have resulted only in repeating or varying what had already been accomplished. Decadence would have at once set in, for, with the means at hand, it would have been impossible to create new æsthetic tissue. Flaubert, by pushing forward into virgin territory, saved the cycle from retrogression. He opened a new field of literary endeavor, and became the first great adventurer along that realistic tangent which we call naturalism.

In order to understand the place that Flaubert holds in the evolution of fiction we must acquaint ourselves with his methods of work. He wrote very little. Four novels (one unfinished), a play and three short stories represent practically his entire production. Withal, he worked constantly and with intense concentration; his exertions were of longer duration even than Balzac's. This was because he concerned himself mainly with the perfection of details. He accumulated innumerable notes. We are told that he would read a hundred volumes for one page of facts. It would take him many weeks to prepare himself for the description of one scene. He would write ten times the actual material needed, and then spend months on a scru-

pulous process of elimination. He made trips to the Orient in order to acquaint himself with an environment he wished to reproduce. His stupendous researches into historical and ethnological data required years of application; and his "La Tentation de Saint-Antoine" was a slow growth through two decades. Moreover, these preparatory labors supplied him only with the framework of his story. He was equally meticulous in his fabrication of the book's verbal garb. Each sentence was constructed with the precision and care of a lapidary cutting a precious stone. He changed words, remoulded phrases, added and subtracted syllables, rearranged punctuation, balanced paragraphs: every section of his writings passed through numberless redactions. No detail of style was so minute as to escape his consideration.

Flaubert's aim was an accurate and meticulous reconstruction of life. We have recently learned that "Madame Bovary" was not an original story, but that both characters and incidents, with few variations, were adapted from life. Flaubert merely played the historian to actuality. "Madame Bovary," stripped of its exquisite garb, is little more than a keenly analytic and wholly external account of a woman's disintegration under the corrosion of mediocrity. "L'Education Sentimentale" follows the same structural method. "Salammbô" and "La Tentation de Saint-Antoine" are detailed reconstructions of antiquity; he built both stories on data he had unearthed in historical records.

Flaubert's contribution to literature, however, was an important one. He has perhaps had more influence on the trend of modern fiction than any other writer during the last century. His "Madame Bovary" is, in a sense, one of the great classics of modern literature. It ushered in an entirely new school. It has been a model for scores of other novels; and in denying Flaubert the highest place as an artist it is not my intention to question the necessity of his labors. In the history of prose fiction his position is assured for all time. Without him we would be far behind our present point of development. The work he did, and the work of succeeding writers who drew their inspiration from his books, represented a phase of æsthetic evolution

through which literature had to pass before any progress was possible.

Because Flaubert was so consummately a master of his materials and was able to state in such an impelling and enduring manner the results of his researches in documentary means, the new problems were solved and set aside with greater dispatch and thoroughness than had his genius been less powerful. Despite all its inherent defects, the age of naturalism was inevitable, just as was the age of Impressionism in painting. Without the experimentations of pioneers no satisfying consummation can take place; and the strength of art's precursors determines the quality of what follows. There has been no more earnest and splendid innovator than Flaubert. His devotion to an ideal and his loyalty to its exacting demands calls for the highest praise and the most genuine admiration. To his unremitting toil we owe much that is best in all literature since his day.

Both Champfleury and Mérimée—the first in “Chien-Caillou” and the second in “Colomba” and “Carmen”—had contributed to Flaubert's naturalistic attitude. Flaubert, in turn, had given power to the Goncourts. And the Goncourts were the primary influence in what we have come to call Zolaism. These two brothers, Edmond and Jules, took a decided step forward from “Madame Bovary.” In them Flaubert's æsthetic qualities were curtailed, and his naturalistic qualities emphasized. They wished to picture life in all its apparent unreason and chaos, and cared little even for the attractiveness of their record. Nor did they seek to arrange their adverseria. They were content with a series of realistic notations, provided the externals of nature were truthfully adhered to. In fact, they ignored, on principle, every artistic demand which might have given the appearance of artificiality to their books, or which would have indicated a digression from the most scrupulous transcription of observable life. In the introduction to “*Germinie Lacerteux*” they assert that, since the novel is becoming “moral contemporary history” and has “undertaken the studies and duties of science,” it is able “to claim the liberties and immunities of the latter.” The credo implied in

this pronouncement was in direct line with the new tendencies; for the novel, beginning with Flaubert, had entered upon a career of "social inquiry" and "clinical analysis."

Where Zola differed from his predecessors was in his breadth and vitality of vision and in his singleness of purpose. Only in his very early books was he influenced by the so-called Romantic movement. Beginning with "*La Fortune des Rougon*" he was in full possession of his medium. His goal had been definitely set, and his labor, for years to come, had been mapped out. He had conceived a gigantic task, almost equal to that of Balzac in the "*Comédie Humaine*"; and the greater part of his productive life was devoted to its fulfillment.

The characteristics of Zola's writings are easily defined. Subtlety was a virtue which his robust nature repudiated. The plan of his novels permitted only of the broadest brushing, and, in order to cover the field he had chosen, it was necessary to work rapidly and obviously. Therefore we can understand his methods at a glance; and, since he himself on numerous occasions stated his aims, we need not fear that a brief summary will do him an injustice.

Zola was the insatiable recorder of life. He dealt only with the materials of the visual, contemporary world. He held the mirror not up to nature but up to his immediate external environment. He cared nothing for philosophic causes, but solely for effects. The pageant idea of life was uppermost in all he wrote. Moreover, there was no self-imposed eclecticism: the mere existence of an object made it his rightful property. The important and the unimportant, the aspect and the reality, the product and the by-product, had almost equal interest for him. When he gave reasons for actions, he went no deeper than economics and heredity. Whatever causation his books contain was based on physical laws, not on metaphysical principles. He observed and reflected life with inextinguishable ardor. No detail escaped tabulation, for his desire was to complete the representation of externals. As a result, his naturalism adhered to the visual deceptions of corporeality.

It was inevitable, in the very nature of Zola's methodical manner of writing, that the individual character should have been sacrificed to a type. Many of the environments which he undertook to describe, and many of the people whom he bodied forth, were outside of his personal experiences. In order to acquaint himself with these unfamiliar facts, he constantly made notes, gathered data, and interviewed whoever could throw light on the phase of life he wished to reconstruct. Many of the characters themselves were assembled in this fashion. Zola had no intimate knowledge of them, as had Balzac; and he studied them, not at first hand and in relation to the psychological and impulsive factors which determined their existence, but by their acts and appetites and social characteristics. In presenting them he was necessitated to build them according to this new plan; and, in order to make them plausible and living, he had to endow them with the traits of the class to which they belonged. Consequently, they are summaries of temperament, composite photographs of many members of a type, logical to a given set of human qualities. Although their actions may be exaggerated and their fates exceptional, nevertheless they are all deductions from the same hypothesis. In them the human problem is merely carried out to a larger number of decimal points.

The scenes of Zola's stories are constructed in the same manner. No setting is representative of a single village, a single middle-class household, a single phase of metropolitan life, or a single commercial environment. His "local color" is evocative of an entire side of the material worlds; and the fact that it is often overdrawn merely intensifies its general effect. Again, Zola's talent is most conspicuous when he is dealing with crowds. He has never been surpassed as a depicter of large bodies in movement. This ability to visualize men and things in the aggregate is due to his externally inclusive vision. Balzac created form, but Zola created only volume. Life to Zola was a world of shifting substances, and when he sought to reproduce them the result was massive and chaotic.

In thus criticizing Zola no disparagement is implied. He

was in no sense decadent, and his work marked a distinct literary advance on the experimental side of letters. Like all the naturalists, he was too busy amassing information to pause long enough to make profound inquiry into what he recorded. Even comparisons were rare in his works, and he seldom weighed facts in the scales of reason. His multitudinous minutiae shaped themselves into moral and ethical articles of faith, and one can discover social doctrines dictating his impressions. But withal he was a researcher first and a reformer afterward; and his lessons, whether true or false, have no place in æsthetics.

Those who see in Zola only a brutal unpleasantness bring forth the work of Daudet as evidence that naturalism need not be offensive. But Daudet, despite his affiliations, stood somewhat outside the main naturalistic current. He lacked both the vigor and the earnestness of Flaubert, the Goncourts and Zola. Though deeply influenced by the books of these other writers, his nature was such that he feminized whatever vitality they imparted to him. His talent was light and poetic and unoriginal, and in general he touched only on the more pleasing and readily acceptable aspects of naturalistic document. He was victimized by a moral idealism which gave a tone of artificiality to his most serious endeavors.

Daudet viewed life eclectically, and rigidly avoided those things which might have shocked his sensitive readers. Where Flaubert or Zola, for instance, would have dissected with stringent impartiality such a character as Tartarin, Daudet not only sentimentalized him but translated him into terms of ironical and sometimes boisterous humor. Even in "Jack" a false pathos and genial humor are mingled with the realities; and the same is true of "Le Nabab," although much of it is drawn direct from life. In "Numa Roumestan" Daudet's irrepressible optimism, working inversely through the principal character, distorts the story's actualism to such a degree that we have, not a record of life itself, but an analysis of the sentiments at work upon life. "L'Évangéliste," the bitterest of all his novels, while wholly objective in execution, is animated by a personal and

intimate religious purpose; and "Sapho," in which he attains to the height of his talent, is by no means free from falsities. Its skilful and delicate narrative art, rather than its vital accuracy, has preserved it, and its moral lesson cannot escape the most prurient reader. Daudet, in fact, may be considered as the feminine side of naturalism.

* The works of Maupassant are justly regarded as criteria for the modern short story. But although he carried this literary form to a high degree of literary perfection, his conception of it was æsthetically limited. In practically all of his writings he depends for his appeal upon a single episode or effect, and consequently he does not attain to that goal toward which the best art has ever striven—namely, a formal and universal statement of life. His stories rarely impress us as broadly representative; and their characters are not alive with generative vitality. The *idée* in Maupassant's narratives is what holds us. We remember plots, episodes and situations; we retain the atmosphere of events and feel the pressure of moods; but we do not experience a sensation of having had an intimate and comprehensive glimpse of the forces of nature. In truly great art the characters themselves, being creations, give birth to the ideas; and the interactivity between these ideas and the personages from whom they arise produces in us a sense of reality. In Maupassant's stories the ideas are superimposed on the characters who are victims of the author's intellectual domination.

Maupassant's bitter economy of means and his precise and condensed diction are directly traceable to Flaubert's perfection of style; and his perceptive faculties were sharpened by studying "Madame Bovary" rather than "Germinie Lacerteux" or "Le Ventre de Paris." He was interested, not in the panoramic side of life, nor yet in its mass manifestations, but in its snatches of realistic drama. He epitomized the journalistic in literature; for, though he adhered to actuality, his tendency was to choose only such stories as marked a variation from the perpetual commonplace. He had a highly developed "news sense." The world existed for him as a source of "copy," and, with almost unerring

accuracy, he went direct to those events which make up the teeming life of the daily newspaper. The "human interest" of his themes rarely escaped him, and he emphasized it continually, as in his famous "Boule de Suife" which, appearing in "Les Soirées de Médan" along with stories by Zola, Hennique, Alexis, Huysmans, and Céard, went far in establishing his reputation.

The instinct for the singular and the dramatic demanded a form of expression other than the novel, and since French literature already possessed the *conte*, which had been developed from Des Periers and Margaret of Navarre through Marmontel and Voltaire and later found an echo in Daudet and Coppée, it is natural that Maupassant should have seized upon it and turned it to his own ends. It answered his purpose admirably; for the traditional French *conte* was not a skeletonized novel: it was based on a single incident or a single point of view, and was constructed so as to be complete within its narrow boundaries.

Maupassant's most successful stories are not those with the most startling effects, but the ones in which the peasants of Normandy, his native country, are intimately depicted. It is here that his relationship to the naturalists is most clearly discerned. His sporadic flights into the supernatural, by which he is too often judged, were comparatively few, and none of them is representative of him at his best. Nor do his war stories attain to the height of his talent. Excepting "Boule de Suife" and "Mademoiselle Fifi," we find much in them that is trivial and false. His numerous sketches dealing with sex, however, contain many excellent and memorable bits of writing. When Maupassant is not introspective and haunted by his own perversions, these talents approach in merit his splendid Norman documents. But even his second-best stories are markedly superior to those of either his forerunners or his followers. By devoting his time and energy to this literary *genre* he achieved a mastery which has never quite been equalled. The best of our current short stories owe their finest qualities to his influence; and though he did not attempt the highest forms of art,

he made the narrow field which he undertook to cultivate yield a rich harvest.

Huysmans played a far less important part in French naturalism than did Maupassant. For many years he was identified with the movement, and his earlier novels carried onward the ideas of the Goncourts and Zola. Later he took his stand on the psychological side of the naturalistic evolution and laid a stone in the foundation of the structure which Bourget reared; but in the end he was swallowed up in the mystical obscurities of a violent psychic reaction.

There was much of the *arriviste* in Huysmans, and his nature was such that he permitted himself literary indulgences from which the Goncourts and Zola would have shrunk. He saw naturalism only as an adventure in document: its significance escaped him entirely; and, with morbid and short-sighted ardor, he threw himself into the vortex only to be dragged to the bottom by the sheer weight of his misconception.

Huysmans, however, served a good purpose, for he demonstrated that the new methods no longer held any inspiration for the serious writer, and that until another element was added to them they could be used only to restate the old or to express a dissolution of objective subject-matter. He did much to arouse interest in other literary problems and even pointed the way himself in "A Rebours" and "Là-bas." But in his last three novels, "En Route," "La Cathédrale" and "L'Oblat," he departs from strict psychological speculation and becomes enmeshed in morbid religious states of mind. In his eager and impassioned struggle for significant realization he ran the gamut from the coarsest materialism to the most obtuse spiritism. His "Marthe" gave undeniable indications of the beginning of naturalistic bankruptcy. "Les Soeurs Vatar" and "En Ménage" followed at intervals of two years, each adding to the revelation that after "Germinie Lacerteux" and "L'Assommoir" nothing remained to be accomplished until new means were brought into being. Huysmans' "Sac-au-Dos" (in that famous collection of stories, "Les Soirées de Médan") made a striking contrast with the "Poule de souf" of Maupassant and the

spirited and robust "L'Attaque de le Moulin" of Zola. It was more crudely naturalistic than any of the stories which accompanied it, but it served its purpose well; and one cannot ignore it in reviewing the evolution of modern French fiction.

Few significant advances have been made in the art of the short story in France since the termination of the naturalistic methods. The short story has gone through many variations, and several men—such as Anatole France and Paul Bourget—have individualized it by personal and temperamental qualifications; but its actual evolution has progressed only slightly. The important recent advances of this *genre* have taken place in England. However, a wealth of imaginative material has been added to it on the Continent; and unless we know the various ways in which it has been expressed by post-naturalistic writers we are unable to gauge either the character or the quality of the more modern literary achievements.

Coppée, for example, contributed nothing of an important nature to the development of the short story, but he nevertheless gave an impetus to its manufacture. He did not regard his work solely with the eyes of an artist, nor did he even follow the artistic principles established by his predecessors. He was sympathetically, not to say sentimentally, interested in the lower-middle classes, and many of his best stories are those which deal somewhat idealistically with the life of the humble. He began his career as a poet, and while his verses are more capable than his stories, his chief influence has been in the field of fiction because of the great popularity which this latter type of his work has had.

Coppée stemmed from Leconte de Lisle, and rarely in his entire career did he shake off his heritage of suavity and mildness. In his most characteristic writings he is more or less genial; there is an undeniable grace and facility to his style; he is simple and direct in his manner of expression; and—it must not be denied—there is at times a genuine beauty in his work. Furthermore, he never sought to curb his sympathy for the masses, and he permitted his idealism of sentiment to have full play at all times. He was an instinc-

tive story-teller and, within his limitations, closely followed the realistic means of his forerunners.

Catulle Mendès, on the other hand, was frankly trivial. His art was in direct line with that of Gautier: he laid chief emphasis on the artifices of style. There is a lightness and frailty to his stories which gives them a delicate and exquisite charm. But one never finds in him any of the profounder qualities of literature. What he does, he does perfectly. His work is sensitively feminine, at times even frivolous; but in every age there is a place for such evanescent trifles as those on which Mendès expends his energy, and he succeeds where scores of others have failed. He is highly artistic in the more superficial sense, for he developed the exterior of his medium with greater subtlety than did any of his contemporaries. When he attempts to go outside of this restricted field—as in “*La Femme-Enfant*,” for example—he fails. His gifts are too delicate for serious satire.

A far more robust and more important talent is that of Anatole France. France, in fact, is a writer of great resources and broad capabilities. He is an apostle of Renan, and whether one reads his poetry or his short stories, his critical writings or his novels, his fairy-tales or his fantasies, one always encounters a philosophical questioning, a deep-rooted skepticism, and an irony which colors and tinctures every phase of his subject-matter. As a stylist France has few modern equals. His writings are fluent and graceful without being weak or effeminate; and he can clothe the most commonplace material in such a way as to give it fascination and a degree of power. In the pure sense, however, France is not an artist, for he is concerned more with ideas than with formal relationships. The climaxes and the effects of his stories are largely intellectual. He often uses the fictional form where the great majority of writers would have used the essay form; and in “*The Red Lily*,” the one novel in which he attempted merely a psychological delineation of character, we may seek in vain for those qualities which give his other works their permanent and unquestioned value.

That France has the mind of a critic rather than the mind of an artist, is attested to by the fact that, were he to strip his books of their satire and their irony, they would lose much of their vitality. It is the idea that appeals to us in his principal writings; and in his best fiction we find but little plot. But what he lacks in the ordinary qualities of his craft he makes up for by his reflections, his wit, and his permeating irony. France is not strictly a modern, and naturalism plays but a small part in his literary conceptions. When he deals with current conditions it is in a somewhat fantastic spirit, and he often goes back to ancient times for his themes, as in "Balthazar" and "Thaïs." But all his writings possess individuality; they are the works of a man of broad culture, and they are executed with such competency and with so keen a sense for intellectual values that they have taken their place in the very forefront of modern literary achievement.

Pierre Loti is another writer of modern France whose position is unique. He has almost nothing in common with his contemporaries. There are neither complexities nor sophistications in his work. He stands entirely outside of the evolution of modern literature; and yet his work possesses so many arresting qualities that it is impossible to ignore him. He has become a conspicuous figure in his nation's letters.

Loti is primarily an exotic, and he can convey more subtly than any other writer of his time the sensations, the sensuousness, the color and the atmosphere of foreign and unfamiliar lands and conditions. His talent is primarily descriptive; he has a marvelous ability for projecting vivid and intense pictures. And he achieves his effects by the simplest means—by direct diction, by delicate suggestion, by precisely wrought impressions. Most of Loti's writings are tinged with a kind of dim melancholy which at times becomes pessimism, and at other times is nothing short of morbidity. Tragedy appeals to him always, for in it are the potentialities of delicate and sensitive emotionalism.

"The Island Fisherman" is, in many ways, Loti's most characteristic work. It possesses a subtle charm, a dramatic

simplicity and a naïve statement of emotions, which belong peculiarly to Loti's temperament and talent. "Madame Chrysanthème" is another one of his books which reveals his amazing ability to interpret accurately an exotic environment. The East somehow seems more closely akin to his nature than does the West; but no matter what theme he touches he succeeds in giving it a vague and penetrating charm.

Although Paul Bourget has been hailed, and actually regards himself, as the instigator of a new school of fiction, he is, in reality, only a manifestation of the continuity and development of material naturalism in France. He carried forward the methods of Flaubert, the Goncourts and Zola; but instead of applying these methods to the world of actuality, he used them to portray the complexities of the mind and the emotions. Only one side of naturalistic investigation had been thoroughly accomplished by Zola and his school—namely, visible life. Bourget rounded out the investigation by delving into "states of mind" and setting down the results of his observations and analyses. In fact, he sought to do for the subjective life of man what Zola had done for man's external life.

There were three different stages to Bourget's work, although at bottom it was all inspired by a desire to solve a single problem. In his first novels—"L'Irréparable," "Cruelle Enigme," "Un Crime d'Amour," and "André Cornélius"—we find a preoccupation with material "properties." There are detailed descriptions of the settings wherein he has placed his characters—a meticulous concern with the numerous objects of life, which, in constituting atmosphere, would tend to influence the natures of his personages. The personages themselves are presented to us in their reactions with environments. Their habits and activities are set down; and by this method, partly analytical and partly expositional, the picture of their natures are presented. In the novels which followed—"Mensonges," "Le Disciple," "Coeur de Femme," "Nouveau Pastels" and "Cosmopolis"—Bourget plunges into psychology and concentrates his entire attention on the obscure mechanism of the mind. At first he

adheres rigorously to the scientific formula, but later he reveals strong temperamental affinities to the new Catholic movement, and, in a measure, repudiates his former methods. The introduction to "Le Disciple" gives indications of the birth of this new spirit. Bourget, however, continued his analytic investigations, revealing more and more his kinship with the individualism of Stendhal. His last books, such as "Terre Promise" and "Recommencements," show a declination of his purely experimental methods. A personal attitude enters into them: they grow less universal, after the manner of Huysmans; and they consequently lose some of their significance.

Despite all the charges of morbidity and pessimism which may be brought against Bourget, he accomplished a vital literary task. The charge that he dealt almost exclusively with one particular social *milieu* does not militate against his importance. Undoubtedly there was a richer and more complex field for investigation among the more sensitive upper classes than in the lower intellectual walks of life, and therefore his passion for analysis found a greater range of activity. His diagnoses were for the most part clear and penetrating. He was a brilliant interpreter of motives and sensations; and his dissections of the human mind under various emotional and environmental influences were such as to make him the final exponent of constructive naturalism in French. At his best he was possessed of unbiased and scientific accuracy. "Un Crime D'Amour" is an excellent example of this remorseless anatomizing of character. "Mensonges" also diagnoses the sensual emotions with scrupulous impersonality. But Bourget, though often best in the analysis of passionnal themes, does not limit himself to the psychology of sex. "André Cornélius," for example, is built on an entirely different set of emotions. "Le Disciple" deals with the disrupting moral effects of philosophical abstractions; and "L'Emigré" recounts mainly a conflict of ideas. But one cannot point to any particular books of Bourget to the exclusion of others. Like Zola, he unearthed and recorded many phases of life; and his gift to literature lies

in the totality of his labors rather than in a few isolated documents.

Prévost was also a disciple of psychological naturalism, but he did not carry his fiction so far into the realms of pure mentality as did Bourget. In fact, he sought to combine the two extremes of the naturalistic school: on the one hand, he clung to an honest and detailed realism, and on the other, he investigated those states of mind which evolve from, and in turn govern, the actualities of life. Maupassant has as important an influence in Prévost's writings as does Bourget; but in thus attempting to embrace two fictional elements Prévost has failed to strike any profound strata of literary investigation. His naturalism is not complete (certain of Maupassant's writings succeed far better in what they attempt to portray than "*L'Automne d'une Femme*"); nor is his psychology always penetrating. His "*Letters of Women*" and his "*Demi-Vierges*" are far more superficial than similar investigations by Bourget. "*The Lover's Confession*," by posing sentimentality against psychology, renders itself false and ineffectual. Prévost, however, has had a wide influence. Although he is neither rich nor complete in achievement, he has nevertheless pointed the way for other writers. Naturalism, if it is to be fully representative of life, must take into consideration the researches of Zola as well as those of Bourget, for both have their place in a complete statement of actuality. Prévost understood this; and herein lies much of his importance.

Maurice Barrès' first book was actually sponsored by Bourget; but Barrès was in no sense a slavish follower of psychological naturalism. Indeed, he advanced a new credo, and his influence on younger France has been far-reaching. He reacted to the older moral dictates and boldly enunciated the doctrine of individualism. He was an apostle of the ego, and exhorted all the younger men to abide strictly and persistently by their personal dictates. In following out this shibboleth he was at first guilty of all manner of obscurities, and "*Le Jardin de Bérénice*" and "*Un Homme Libre*" make difficult reading even for those schooled in the subtle ramifications of Bourget's mental probings. Even in

his later works his idealism is too subtle for the general reader. He is, and perhaps will always remain, a literary man's novelist.

In his psychological investigations Barrès not often tended toward the metaphysical or, what he himself called it in connection with his earlier books, the "spiritual." But he was sufficiently clear and rationalistic in his methods, as well as in his mental attitude, to bring about what amounted almost to a Barrès cult. In his later novels—those which followed his famous "*L'Ennemi des Lois*"—there is a change in his point of view. He forgoes his pure logic and his insistence upon the doctrine of individualism, and lays his chief emphasis on what may be called the more "human" qualities in his art. His most characteristic works, however, and those which have given him his influence, are the ones in which he developed the psychological methods of fiction.

There have been almost innumerable literary "schools" among the writers of the new generation in France. The majority of them have no deep foundation in æsthetic principles, and so can be regarded only as transient innovations. There are, however, in modern France many men who have adhered to the best and most solid traditions, and who, by adding to the older forms their own personal talents and viewpoints, have produced fiction of lasting value.

The most promising of these younger men was Charles-Louis Philippe, who died in 1909 at the age of thirty-four. In his death was cut short what was perhaps the most promising realistic talent among the younger French writers. But Philippe has left us a number of books—such as "*La Mère et l'Enfant*," "*Bubu de Montparnasse*," "*Père Perdrix*," and "*Charles Blanchard*"—which possess many sterling and vigorous qualities. Though very young when these works appeared, Philippe exercised a considerable influence. Unfortunately some of that influence was toward decadence, for many of his disciples saw in him only superficial eccentricities of attitude and diction, and straightway developed those characteristics without taking into account his really valuable contributions to literature.

Philippe was a naturalist in the same sense that Mau-

passant was, but to Maupassant's naturalism he added realistic and psychological qualities which give to his work a brilliant color of truth. He waged an effective war against dilettanteism; he held ever before him an unblased vision of actuality; there was in his writing no cultural pretensions. Experience was the basis of his art; and his simple and straightforward style was such that he could vivify and project those experiences in the pages of his books. He was a serious artist, and recent French literature owes much both to his example and to his accomplishments.

SOLANGE

(Dr. Ledru's Story of the Reign of Terror)

By ALEXANDRE DUMAS

LEAVING l'Abbaye, I walked straight across the Place Turenne to the Rue Tournon, where I had lodgings, when I heard a woman scream for help.

It could not be an assault to commit robbery, for it was hardly ten o'clock in the evening. I ran to the corner of the place whence the sounds proceeded, and by the light of the moon, just then breaking through the clouds, I beheld a woman in the midst of a patrol of sans-culottes.

The lady observed me at the same instant, and seeing, by the character of my dress, that I did not belong to the common order of people, she ran toward me, exclaiming:

"There is M. Albert! He knows me! He will tell you that I am the daughter of Mme. Ledieu, the laundress."

With these words the poor creature, pale and trembling with excitement, seized my arm and clung to me as a shipwrecked sailor to a spar.

"No matter whether you are the daughter of Mme. Ledieu or some one else, as you have no pass, you must go with us to the guard-house."

The young girl pressed my arm. I perceived in this pressure the expression of her great distress of mind. I understood it.

"So it is you, my poor Solange?" I said. "What are you doing here?"

"There, messieurs!" she exclaimed in tones of deep anxiety; "do you believe me now?"

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2 THE GREAT MODERN FRENCH STORIES

"You might at least say 'citizens!'"

"Ah, sergeant, do not blame me for speaking that way," said the pretty young girl; "my mother has many customers among the great people, and taught me to be polite. That's how I acquired this bad habit—the habit of the aristocrats; and, you know, sergeant, it's so hard to shake off old habits!"

This answer, delivered in trembling accents, concealed a delicate irony that was lost on all save me. I asked myself, who is this young woman? The mystery seemed complete. This alone was clear, she was not the daughter of a laundress.

"How did I come here, Citizen Albert?" she asked. "Well, I will tell you. I went to deliver some washing. The lady was not at home, and so I waited; for in these hard times every one needs what little money is coming to him. In that way it grew dark, and so I fell among these gentlemen—beg pardon, I would say citizens. They asked for my pass. As I did not have it with me, they were going to take me to the guard-house. I cried out in terror, which brought you to the scene; and as luck would have it, you are a friend. I said to myself, as M. Albert knows my name to be Solange Ledieu, he will vouch for me; and that you will, will you not, M. Albert?"

"Certainly, I will vouch for you."

"Very well," said the leader of the patrol; "and who, pray, will vouch for you, my friend?"

"Danton! Do you know him? Is he a good patriot?"

"Oh, if Danton will vouch for you, I have nothing to say."

"Well, there is a session of the Cordeliers to-day. Let us go there."

"Good," said the leader. "Citizens, let us go to the Cordeliers."

The club of the Cordeliers met at the old Cordelier monastery in the Rue l'Observance. We arrived there after scarce a minute's walk. At the door I tore a page from my note-book, wrote a few words upon it with a lead pencil, gave it to the sergeant, and requested him to hand it to Danton, while I waited outside with the men.

The sergeant entered the clubhouse and returned with Danton.

"What!" said he to me; "they have arrested you, my friend? You, the friend of Camilles—you, one of the most loyal republicans? Citizens," he continued, addressing the sergeant, "I vouch for him. Is that sufficient?"

"You vouch for him. Do you also vouch for her?" asked the stubborn sergeant.

"For her? To whom do you refer?"

"This girl."

"For everything; for everybody who may be in his company. Does that satisfy you?"

"Yes," said the man; "especially since I have had the privilege of seeing you."

With a cheer for Danton, the patrol marched away. I was about to thank Danton, when his name was called repeatedly within.

"Pardon me, my friend," he said; "you hear? There is my hand; I must leave you—the left. I gave my right to the sergeant. Who knows, the good patriot may have scrofula?"

"I'm coming!" he exclaimed, addressing those within in his mighty voice with which he could pacify or arouse the masses. He hastened into the house.

I remained standing at the door, alone with my unknown.

"And now, my lady," I said, "whither would you have me escort you? I am at your disposal."

"Why, to Mme. Ledieu," she said with a laugh. "I told you she was my mother."

"And where does Mme. Ledieu reside?"

"Rue Ferou, 24."

"Then, let us proceed to Rue Ferou, 24."

On the way neither of us spoke a word. But by the light of the moon, enthroned in serene glory in the sky, I was able to observe her at my leisure. She was a charming girl of twenty or twenty-two—brunette, with large blue eyes, more expressive of intelligence than melancholy—a finely chiseled nose, mocking lips, teeth of pearl, hands like a queen's, and feet like a child's; and all these, in spite of her

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costume of a laundress, betokened an aristocratic air that had aroused the sergeant's suspicions not without justice.

Arrived at the door of the house, we looked at each other a moment in silence.

"Well, my dear M. Albert, what do you wish?" my fair unknown asked with a smile.

"I was about to say, my dear Mlle. Solange, that it was hardly worth while to meet if we are to part so soon."

"Oh, I beg ten thousand pardons! I find it was well worth the while; for if I had not met you, I should have been dragged to the guard-house, and there it would have been discovered that I am not the daughter of Mme. Ledieu—in fact, it would have developed that I am an aristocrat, and in all likelihood they would have cut off my head."

"You admit, then, that you are an aristocrat?"

"I admit nothing."

"At least you might tell me your name."

"Solange."

"I know very well that this name, which I gave you on the inspiration of the moment, is not your right name."

"No matter; I like it, and I am going to keep it—at least for you."

"Why should you keep it for me, if we are not to meet again?"

"I did not say that. I only said that if we should meet again it will not be necessary for you to know my name any more than that I should know yours. To me you will be known as Albert, and to you I shall always be Solange."

"So be it, then; but I say, Solange," I began.

"I am listening, Albert," she replied.

"You are an aristocrat—that you admit."

"If I did not admit it, you would surmise it, and so my admission would be divested of half its merit."

"And you were pursued because you were suspected of being an aristocrat?"

"I fear so."

"And you are hiding to escape persecution?"

"In the Rue Ferou, No. 24, with Mme. Ledieu, whose

husband was my father's coachman. You see, I have no secret from you."

"And your father?"

"I shall make no concealment, my dear Albert, of anything that relates to me. But my father's secrets are not my own. My father is in hiding, hoping to make his escape. That is all I can tell you."

"And what are you going to do?"

"Go with my father, if that be possible. If not, allow him to depart without me until the opportunity offers itself to me to join him."

"Were you coming from your father when the guard arrested you to-night?"

"Yes."

"Listen, dearest Solange."

"I am all attention."

"You observed all that took place to-night?"

"Yes. I saw that you had powerful influence."

"I regret my power is not very great. However, I have friends."

"I made the acquaintance of one of them."

"And you know he is not one of the least powerful men of the times."

"Do you intend to enlist his influence to enable my father to escape?"

"No, I reserve him for you."

"But my father?"

"I have other ways of helping your father."

"Other ways?" exclaimed Solange, seizing my hands and studying me with an anxious expression.

"If I serve your father, will you then sometimes think kindly of me?"

"Oh, I shall all my life hold you in grateful remembrance!"

She uttered these words with an enchanting expression of devotion. Then she looked at me beseechingly and said:

"But will that satisfy you?"

"Yes," I said.

"Ah, I was not mistaken. You are kind, generous. I

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thank you for my father and myself. Even if you should fail, I shall be grateful for what you have already done!"

"When shall we meet again, Solange?"

"When do you think it necessary to see me again?"

"To-morrow, when I hope to have good news for you."

"Well, then, to-morrow."

"Where?"

"Here."

"Here in the street?"

"Well, mon Dieu!" she exclaimed. "You see, it is the safest place. For thirty minutes, while we have been talking here, not a soul has passed."

"Why may I not go to you, or you come to me?"

"Because it would compromise the good people if you should come to me, and you would incur serious risk if I should go to you."

"Oh, I would give you the pass of one of my relatives."

"And send your relative to the guillotine if I should be accidentally arrested!"

"True. I will bring you a pass made out in the name of Solange."

"Charming! You observe Solange is my real name."

"And the hour?"

"The same at which we met to-night—ten o'clock, if you please."

"All right; ten o'clock. And how shall we meet?"

"That is very simple. Be at the door at five minutes of ten, and at ten I will come down."

"Then, at ten to-morrow, dear Solange."

"To-morrow at ten, dear Albert."

I wanted to kiss her hand; she offered me her brow.

The next day I was in the street at half past nine. At a quarter of ten Solange opened the door. We were both ahead of time.

With one leap I was by her side.

"I see you have good news," she said.

"Excellent! First, here is a pass for you."

"First my father!"

She repelled my hand.

"Your father is saved, if he wishes."

"Wishes, you say? What is required of him?"

"He must trust me."

"That is assured."

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes."

"You have discussed the situation with him?"

"It was unavoidable. Heaven will help us."

"Did you tell your father all?"

"I told him you had saved my life yesterday, and that you would perhaps save his to-morrow."

"To-morrow! Yes, quite right; to-morrow I shall save his life, if it is his will."

"How? What? Speak! Speak! If that were possible, how fortunately all things have come to pass!"

"However——" I began hesitatingly.

"Well?"

"It will be impossible for you to accompany him."

"I told you I was resolute."

"I am quite confident, however, that I shall be able later to procure a passport for you."

"First tell me about my father; my own distress is less important."

"Well, I told you I had friends, did I not?"

"Yes."

"To-day I sought out one of them."

"Proceed."

"A man whose name is familiar to you; whose name is a guarantee of courage and honour."

"And this man is?"

"Marceau."

"General Marceau?"

"Yes."

"True, he will keep a promise."

"Well, he has promised."

"Mon Dieu! How happy you make me! What has he promised? Tell me all."

"He has promised to help us."

"In what manner?"

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"In a very simple manner. Kléber has just had him promoted to the command of the western army. He departs to-morrow night."

"To-morrow night! We shall have no time to make the smallest preparation."

"There are no preparations to make."

"I do not understand."

"He will take your father with him."

"My father?"

"Yes, as his secretary. Arrived in the Vendée, your father will pledge his word to the general to undertake nothing against France. From there he will escape to Brittany, and from Brittany to England. When he arrives in London, he will inform you; I shall obtain a passport for you, and you will join him in London."

"To-morrow," exclaimed Solange; "my father departs to-morrow!"

"There is no time to waste."

"My father has not been informed."

"Inform him."

"To-night?"

"To-night."

"But how, at this hour?"

"You have a pass and my arm."

"True. My pass."

I gave it to her. She thrust it into her bosom.

"Now, your arm."

I gave her my arm, and we walked away. When we arrived at the Place Turenne—that is, the spot where we had met the night before—she said: "Await me here."

I bowed and waited.

She disappeared around the corner of what was formerly the Hôtel Malignon. After a lapse of fifteen minutes she returned.

"Come," she said, "my father wishes to receive and thank you."

She took my arm and led me up to the Rue St. Guillaume, opposite the Hôtel Mortemart. Arrived here, she took a bunch of keys from her pocket, opened a small, con-

cealed door, took me by the hand, conducted me up two flights of steps, and knocked in a peculiar manner.

A man of forty-eight or fifty years opened the door. He was dressed as a working man and appeared to be a book-binder. But at the first utterance that burst from his lips, the evidence of the seigneur was unmistakable.

"Monsieur," he said, "Providence has sent you to us. I regard you an emissary of fate. Is it true that you can save me, or, what is more, that you wish to save me?"

I admitted him completely to my confidence. I informed him that Marceau would take him as his secretary, and would exact no promise other than that he would not take up arms against France.

"I cheerfully promise it now, and will repeat it to him."

"I thank you in his name as well as in my own."

"But when does Marceau depart?"

"To-morrow."

"Shall I go to him to-night?"

"Whenever you please; he expects you."

Father and daughter looked at each other.

"I think it would be wise to go this very night," said Solange.

"I am ready; but if I should be arrested, seeing that I have no permit?"

"Here is mine."

"But you?"

"Oh, I am known."

"Where does Marceau reside?"

"Rue de l'Université, 40, with his sister, Mlle. Dégraviers-Marceau."

"Will you accompany me?"

"I shall follow you at a distance, to accompany made-moiselle home when you are gone."

"How will Marceau know that I am the man of whom you spoke to him?"

"You will hand him this tri-colored cockade; that is the sign of identification."

"And how shall I reward my liberator?"

"By allowing him to save your daughter also."

Very well."

He put on his hat and extinguished the lights, and we descended by the gleam of the moon which penetrated the stair-windows.

At the foot of the steps he took his daughter's arm, and by way of the Rue des Saints Pères we reached Rue de l'Université. I followed them at a distance of ten paces. We arrived at No. 40 without having met any one. I rejoined them there.

"That is a good omen," I said; "do you wish me to go up with you?"

"No. Do not compromise yourself any further. Await my daughter here."

I bowed.

"And now, once more, thanks and farewell," he said, giving me his hand. "Language has no words to express my gratitude. I pray that heaven may some day grant me the opportunity of giving fuller expression to my feelings."

I answered him with a pressure of the hand.

He entered the house. Solange followed him; but she, too, pressed my hand before she entered.

In ten minutes the door was reopened.

"Well?" I asked.

"Your friend," she said, "is worthy of his name; he is as kind and considerate as yourself. He knows that it will contribute to my happiness to remain with my father until the moment of departure. His sister has ordered a bed placed in her room. To-morrow at three o'clock my father will be out of danger. To-morrow evening at ten I shall expect you in the Rue Ferou, if the gratitude of a daughter who owes her father's life to you is worth the trouble."

"Oh, be sure I shall come. Did your father charge you with any message for me?"

"He thanks you for your pass, which he returns to you, and begs you to join him as soon as possible."

"Whenever it may be your desire to go," I said, with a strange sensation at my heart.

"At least, I must know where I am to join him," she said.

"Ah, you are not yet rid of me!"

I seized her hand and pressed it against my heart, but she offered me her brow, as on the previous evening, and said: "Until to-morrow."

I kissed her on the brow; but now I no longer strained her head against my breast, but her heaving bosom, her throbbing heart.

I went home in a state of delirious ecstasy such as I had never experienced. Was it the consciousness of a generous action, or was it love for this adorable creature? I know not whether I slept or woke. I only know that all the harmonies of nature were singing within me; that the night seemed endless, and the day eternal; I know that though I wished to speed the time, I did not wish to lose a moment of the days still to come.

The next day I was in the Rue Ferou at nine o'clock. At half-past nine Solange made her appearance.

She approached me and threw her arms around my neck.

"Saved!" she said; "my father is saved! And this I owe you. Oh, how I love you!"

Two weeks later Solange received a letter announcing her father's safe arrival in England.

The next day I brought her a passport.

When Solange received it she burst into tears.

"You do not love me!" she exclaimed.

"I love you better than my life," I replied; "but I pledged your father my word, and I must keep it."

"Then, I will break mine," she said. "Yes, Albert; if you have the heart to let me go, I have not the courage to leave you."

Alas, she remained!

Three months had passed since that night on which we talked of her escape, and in all that time not a word of parting had passed her lips.

Solange had taken lodgings in the Rue Turenne. I had rented them in her name. I knew no other, while she always addressed me as Albert. I had found her a place as teacher in a young ladies' seminary solely to withdraw her from the espionage of the revolutionary police, which had become more scrutinizing than ever.

Sundays we passed together in the small dwelling, from the bedroom of which we could see the spot where we had first met. We exchanged letters daily, she writing to me under the name of Solange, and I to her under that of Albert.

Those three months were the happiest of my life.

In the meantime I was making some interesting experiments suggested by one of the guillotiniere. I had obtained permission to make certain scientific tests with the bodies and heads of those who perished on the scaffold. Sad to say, available subjects were not wanting. Not a day passed but thirty or forty persons were guillotined, and blood flowed so copiously on the Place de la Révolution that it became necessary to dig a trench three feet deep around the scaffolding. This trench was covered with deals. One of them loosened under the feet of an eight-year-old lad, who fell into the abominable pit and was drowned.

For self-evident reasons I said nothing to Solange of the studies that occupied my attention during the day. In the beginning my occupation had inspired me with pity and loathing, but as time wore on I said: "These studies are for the good of humanity," for I hoped to convince the law-makers of the wisdom of abolishing capital punishment.

The Cemetery of Clamart had been assigned to me, and all the heads and trunks of the victims of the executioner had been placed at my disposal. A small chapel in one corner of the cemetery had been converted into a kind of laboratory for my benefit. You know, when the queens were driven from the palaces, God was banished from the churches.

Every day at six the horrible procession filed in. The bodies were heaped together in a wagon, the heads in a sack. I chose some bodies and heads in a haphazard fashion, while the remainder were thrown into a common grave.

In the midst of this occupation with the dead, my love for Solange increased from day to day; while the poor child reciprocated my affection with the whole power of her pure soul.

Often I had thought of making her my wife; often we

had mutually pictured to ourselves the happiness of such a union. But in order to become my wife, it would be necessary for Solange to reveal her name; and this name, which was that of an emigrant, an aristocrat, meant death.

Her father had repeatedly urged her by letter to hasten her departure, but she had informed him of our engagement. She had requested his consent, and he had given it, so that all had gone well to this extent.

The trial and execution of the queen, Marie Antoinette, had plunged me, too, into deepest sadness. Solange was all tears, and we could not rid ourselves of a strange feeling of despondency, a presentiment of approaching danger, that compressed our hearts. In vain I tried to whisper courage to Solange. Weeping, she reclined in my arms, and I could not comfort her, because my own words lacked the ring of confidence.

We passed the night together as usual, but the night was even more depressing than the day. I recall now that a dog, locked up in a room below us, howled till two o'clock in the morning. The next day we were told that the dog's master had gone away with the key in his pocket, had been arrested on the way, tried at three, and executed at four.

The time had come for us to part. Solange's duties at the school began at nine o'clock in the morning. Her school was in the vicinity of the Botanic Gardens. I hesitated long to let her go; she, too, was loath to part from me. But it must be. Solange was prone to be an object of unpleasant inquiries.

I called a conveyance and accompanied her as far as the Rue des Fosses-Saint-Bernard, where I got out and left her to pursue her way alone. All the way we lay mutely wrapped in each other's arms, mingling tears with our kisses.

After leaving the carriage, I stood as if rooted to the ground. I heard Solange call me, but I dared not go to her, because her face, moist with tears, and her hysterical manner were calculated to attract attention.

Utterly wretched, I returned home, passing the entire day in writing to Solange. In the evening I sent her an entire volume of love-pledges.

My letter had hardly gone to the post when I received one from her.

She had been sharply reprimanded for coming late; had been subjected to a severe cross-examination, and threatened with forfeiture of her next holiday. But she vowed to join me even at the cost of her place. I thought I should go mad at the prospect of being parted from her a whole week. I was more depressed because a letter which had arrived from her father appeared to have been tampered with.

I passed a wretched night and a still more miserable day.

The next day the weather was appalling. Nature seemed to be dissolving in a cold, ceaseless rain—a rain like that which announces the approach of winter. All the way to the laboratory my ears were tortured with the criers announcing the names of the condemned, a large number of men, women, and children. The bloody harvest was over-rich. I should not lack subjects for my investigations that day.

The day ended early. At four o'clock I arrived at Clamart; it was almost night.

The view of the cemetery, with its large, new-made graves; the sparse, leafless trees that swayed in the wind, was desolate, almost appalling.

A large, open pit yawned before me. It was to receive to-day's harvest from the Place de la Révolution. An exceedingly large number of victims was expected, for the pit was deeper than usual.

Mechanically I approached the grave. At the bottom the water had gathered in a pool; my feet slipped; I came within an inch of falling in. My hair stood on end. The rain had drenched me to the skin. I shuddered and hastened into the laboratory.

It was, as I have said, an abandoned chapel. My eyes searched—I know not why—to discover if some traces of the holy purpose to which the edifice had once been devoted did not still adhere to the walls or to the altar; but the walls were bare, the altar empty.

I struck a light and deposited the candle on the operating-table on which lay scattered a miscellaneous assortment

of the strange instruments I employed. I sat down and fell into a reverie. I thought of the poor queen, whom I had seen in her beauty, glory, and happiness, yesterday carted to the scaffold, pursued by the execrations of a people, to-day lying headless on the common sinners' bier—she who had slept beneath the gilded canopy of the throne of the Tuileries and St. Cloud.

As I sat thus, absorbed in gloomy meditation, wind and rain without redoubled in fury. The rain-drops dashed against the window-panes, the storm swept with melancholy moaning through the branches of the trees. Anon there mingled with the violence of the elements the sound of wheels.

It was the executioner's red hearse with its ghastly freight from the Place de la Révolution.

The door of the little chapel was pushed ajar, and two men, drenched with rain, entered, carrying a sack between them.

"There, M. Ledru," said the guillotiner; "there is what your heart longs for! Be in no hurry this night! We'll leave you to enjoy their society alone. Orders are not to cover them up till to-morrow, and so they'll not take cold."

With a horrible laugh, the two executioners deposited the sack in a corner, near the former altar, right in front of me. Thereupon they sauntered out, leaving open the door, which swung furiously on its hinges till my candle flashed and flared in the fierce draft.

I heard them unharness the horse, lock the cemetery, and go away.

I was strangely impelled to go with them, but an indefinable power fettered me in my place. I could not repress a shudder. I had no fear; but the violence of the storm, the splashing of the rain, the whistling sounds of the lashing branches, the shrill vibration of the atmosphere, which made my candle tremble—all this filled me with a vague terror that began at the roots of my hair and communicated itself to every part of my body.

Suddenly I fancied I heard a voice! A voice at once soft

and plaintive; a voice within the chapel, pronouncing the name of "Albert!"

I was startled.

"Albert!"

But one person in all the world addressed me by that name!

Slowly I directed my weeping eyes around the chapel, which, though small, was not completely lighted by the feeble rays of the candle, leaving the nooks and angles in darkness, and my look remained fixed on the blood-soaked sack near the altar with its hideous contents.

At this moment the same voice repeated the same name, only it sounded fainter and more plaintive.

"Albert!"

I bolted out of my chair, frozen with horror.

The voice seemed to proceed from the sack!

I touched myself to make sure that I was awake; then I walked toward the sack with my arms extended before me, but stark and staring with horror. I thrust my hand into it. Then it seemed to me as if two lips, still warm, pressed a kiss upon my fingers!

I had reached that stage of boundless terror where the excess of fear turns into the audacity of despair. I seized the head and, collapsing in my chair, placed it in front of me.

Then I gave vent to a fearful scream. This head, with its lips still warm, with eyes half closed, was the head of Solange!

I thought I should go mad.

Three times I called:

"Solange! Solange! Solange!"

At the third time she opened her eyes and looked at me. Tears trickled down her cheeks; then a moist blow darted from her eyes, as if the soul were passing, and the eyes closed, never to open again.

I sprang to my feet a raving maniac. I wanted to fly; I knocked against the table; it fell. The candle was extinguished; the head rolled upon the floor, and I fell prostrate, as if a terrible fever had stricken me down—an icy shudder convulsed me, and, with a deep sigh, I swooned.

The following morning at six the grave-diggers found me, cold as the flagstones on which I lay.

Solange, betrayed by her father's letter, had been arrested the same day, condemned, and executed.

The head that had called me, the eyes that had looked at me, were the head, the eyes, of Solange!

NAPOLEON AND POPE PIUS VII

(From *La Canne de Jonc*)

By ALFRED DE VIGNY

WE were at Fontainebleau. The Pope had just arrived. The Emperor had awaited him with great impatience, as he desired the Holy Father to crown him. Napoleon received him in person, and they immediately entered the carriage on opposite sides, at the same time apparently with an entire neglect of etiquette, but this was only in appearance, for the movement was thoroughly calculated. It was so arranged that neither might seem to yield precedence or to exact it from the other. The ruse was characteristically Italian. They at once drove towards the palace, where all kinds of rumors were in circulation. I had left several officers in the room which preceded that of the Emperor; and I was quite alone in his apartment.

I was standing looking at a long table, which was of Roman mosaic work, and which was absolutely loaded, covered with heaps of papers. I had often seen Napoleon enter, and submit the pile of documents to a strange system of decision. He did not take the letters either by hazard or in order; but when the number irritated him, he swept them off the table with his hand—striking right and left like a mower, until he had reduced the number to six or seven, which he opened. Such disdainful conduct had moved me singularly. So many letters of distress and mourning cast underfoot as if by an angry wind; so many useless prayers of widows and orphans having no chance except that of being spared by the consular hand; so many groaning

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leaves, moistened by the tears of so many families, trampled under his heel with as little compunction as if they were corpses on a battlefield—all these seemed to represent the fate of France. Although the hand that acted so ruthlessly was strong, it seemed always that such brutal strength was anything but admirable, and it seemed wrong that so much should be left to the caprice of such a man. Moreover, had a little consideration been shown, Napoleon would have had so many more buttresses for his power and authority. I felt my heart rise against the man—but feebly, like the heart of one who was his slave. I thought of the letters which had been treated with such cruel contempt; cries of anguish came from the envelopes; and having read some of the petitions I constituted myself judge between the man and those who had sacrificed themselves so much for him, upon whose necks he was going to fasten the yoke tighter that very day. I was holding one of the papers in my hand, when the beating of the drums informed me of the arrival of Napoleon. Now you know that just as one always sees the flash from a cannon before one hears the report, one always saw him as he was heard to be approaching; he was so active, and seemed to have so little time. When he rode into the courtyard of the palace, his attendants were scarcely able to keep up with him. The sentry had barely time to salute before the Emperor had got down from his horse and was hurrying up the staircase. This time he had left the Pope in the carriage in order to be able to enter the palace alone, and had galloped on ahead. I heard the sound of his spurs at the same time as the drums. I had only just time enough to throw myself into an alcove where there was an old-fashioned high bedstead which was used by no one, and which was, fortunately, concealed by curtains.

The Emperor was in a state of great excitement, and strode about the room as if waiting for some one with great impatience. Having darted across the room several times, he went to the window and began to drum on the panes. A carriage rolled into the court; he ceased beating a tattoo on the glass, and stamped with his foot as if the sight which

he saw in the courtyard was anything but agreeable to him. Then he tore across the room to the door, which he opened for the Pope.

Pius VII entered unattended. Bonaparte hastily closed the door after the old man with the care of a jailer. I will confess that I was in a state of mortal terror at being the third of the party. However, I remained motionless, listening eagerly to every word that was said.

The Pope was tall; his face was long, yellow, and had traces of great suffering, but bore the imprint of a goodness of soul and nobility of spirit which knew no bounds. He had fine, big, black eyes, and his mouth was sweetened by a smile which lent something spirituelle and vivacious to his countenance. It was a smile in which one could detect nothing of the cunning of the world, but which was full to overflowing of Christian goodness. On his head he wore a skull cap, from under which escaped locks of his silver-streaked hair. A red velvet cloak hung negligently on his stooping shoulders, and his robe dragged at his feet. He entered slowly, with the calm and prudent step of an aged man, sank down into one of the big Roman armchairs, which were gilded and covered with eagles, lowered his eyes, and waited to hear what the other Italian had to say to him.

What a scene that was! I can see it still. It was not the genius of the man which I noticed, but his character. Bonaparte was not then as you knew him afterward; he had not grown gross—he had not the swollen face, the gouty legs, nor was he so ridiculously stout as he afterwards became. Unfortunately, in art he is almost always represented by a sort of caricature, so that he will not be handed down to posterity as he really was. He was not ungainly then, but nervous and supple, lithe and active, convulsive in some of his gestures, in some gracious; his chest was flat and narrow—in short, he looked just as I had seen him at Malta.

He did not stop stalking round the room when the Pope entered. He wandered round the chair of the latter like a cautious hunter; then suddenly halting in front of Pius,

he resumed a conversation which had been commenced in the carriage, and which he was evidently anxious to continue.

"I tell you again, Holy Father, I am not a free-thinker; and I don't agree with those who are forever reasoning about religious matters. I assure you that in spite of my old republicans I shall go to mass."

The last words he threw brusquely, as it were, in the Pope's face—incense of flattery undisguised. Then he suddenly stopped and examined the Pope's countenance to catch the result, which he seemed to expect to be great. The old man lowered his eyes and rested his hands on the heads of the eagles which formed the arms of the chair. He seemed to have assumed the attitude of a Roman statue purposely, as if wishing to express: I resign myself to hearing all the profane things that he may choose to say to me!

Bonaparte took a turn round the room, and round the chair which was in the middle, and it was plain to be seen that he was not satisfied either with himself or with his adversary, and that he was reproaching himself for having resumed the conversation so rashly. So he began to talk more connectedly as he walked round the room, all the time watching narrowly the reflection of the pontiff's face in the mirror, and also eyeing him carefully in profile as he passed; but not venturing to look him full in the face for fear of appearing too anxious about the effect of his words.

"There is one thing that hurts me very much, Holy Father," said he, "and that is that you consent to the coronation as you formerly consented to the Concordat—as if you were compelled to do so, and not as of free will. You sit there before me with the air of a martyr, resigned to the will of heaven, and suffering for the sake of your conscience. But that is not the fact. You are not a prisoner. You are as free as the air."

Pius VII smiled and looked his interlocutor in the face. He realized that the despotic nature with which he had to contend was not satisfied with obedience unless one seemed willing, even anxious, to obey.

"Yes," continued Bonaparte, "you are quite free. You

may return to Rome if you like. The road is open and no one will stop you."

Without uttering a word, the Pope sighed and raised his hand and his eyes to heaven; then very slowly he lowered his eyes and studied the cross on his bosom attentively.

Bonaparte continued to walk round the room and to talk to his captive, his voice becoming sweeter and more wheedling.

"Holy Father, were it not for the reverence I have for you I should be inclined to say that you are a little ungrateful. You seem to ignore entirely the services which France has rendered you. As far as I am able to judge, the Council of Venice, which elected you Pope, was influenced somewhat by my campaign in Italy, as well as by a word which I spoke for you. I was very much troubled at the time that Austria treated you so badly. I believe that your Holiness was obliged to return to Rome by sea for fear of passing through Austrian territory."

He stopped for the answer of his silent guest; Pius VII made simply the slightest inclination of the head, and remained plunged in a melancholy reverie which seemed to prevent him from hearing Napoleon.

Bonaparte then pushed a chair near to that of the Pope. I started, for in seeking the chair he had come very near my hiding-place, he even brushed the curtains which concealed me.

"It was as a Catholic really that I was so afflicted about your vexations. I have never had much time to study theology, it is true, but I maintain a great faith in the Church. She has a wonderful vitality, Holy Father, although Voltaire did you some little harm, certainly. Now if you are only willing we can do a great deal of work together in the future."

He assumed a caressing, wheedling air of innocence.

"Really, I have tried to understand your motives, but I can't for the life of me see what objection you can have to making Paris your seat. I'll leave the Tuileries to you if you like. You'll find your room waiting for you there. I scarcely ever go there myself. Don't you see, Father,

it is the capital of the world. I'll do whatever you want me to; and really, after all, I am not as bad as I am painted. If you'll leave war and politics to me you may do as you like in ecclesiastical matters. In fact, I would be your soldier. Now wouldn't that be a grand arrangement? We could hold our councils like Constantine and Charlemagne—I would open and dissolve them; and then I would put the keys of the world into your hands, for as our Lord said: 'I came with a sword,' and I would keep the sword; I would only bring it to you for your blessing after each new success of our arms."

The Pope, who until then had remained as motionless as an Egyptian statue, slowly raised his head, smiled sadly, lifted his eyes to heaven, and said, after a gentle sigh, as if he were confiding the thought to his invisible guardian angel:

"Commediante!"

Napoleon leaped from his chair like a wounded tiger. He was in one of his "yellow tempers." At first he stamped about without uttering a word, biting his lips till the blood came. He no longer circled round his prey cautiously, but walked from end to end of the room with firm resounding steps, and clinking his spurs noisily. The room shook; the curtains trembled like trees at the approach of a storm; I thought that something terrible would surely happen; my hair began to bristle, and I put my hand to my head unwittingly. I looked at the Pope. He did not stir, but simply pressed the heads of the eagles with his hands.

The storm burst violently.

"Comedian! What? I, a comedian? Indeed, I'll play some comedies for you that will set you all a-weeping like women and children! Comedian, forsooth! You are mistaken if you think that you may insult me with impunity. My theatre is the world: the rôle that I play is the double one of master and actor; I use all of you as comedians, popes, kings, peoples, and the string by which I work you—you my puppets—is fear. You would need to be a much heavier man than you are, Signor Chiaramonti, to dare to applaud or hiss me. Do you know that if it be my will

you will become a simple *curé*? As for you and your tiara, France would mock at you if I did not seem to be serious in saluting you.

"Only four years ago nobody dared speak of Christ. Had that state of things continued who would have cared for the Pope, I should like to know? Comedian! You gentlemen are a little too ready at getting a foothold among us. And now you are dissatisfied because I am not such a fool as to sign away the liberties of France as did Louis XIV. But you had better not sing to me in that tune. It is I who hold you between my thumb and finger; it is I who can carry you from north to south and then back again to the north like so many marionettes; it is I who give you some stability because you represent an old idea which I wish to resuscitate; and you have not enough wit to see that, and to act as if you were not aware of the fact. Now I'll speak to you frankly. Trouble your head with your own affairs and don't interfere in what you don't understand and with what doesn't in the least concern you. You seem to think that you are necessary, you set yourselves up as if you were of some weight, and you dress yourselves in women's clothes. But I'll let you know that you don't impose on me with all that; and if you don't change your tactics very soon I'll treat your robes as Charles XII did that of the Grand Vizier—I'll tear them with my spur."

Then he ceased. I scarcely dared breathe. I advanced my head a little, not hearing his voice, to see if the poor old priest was dead with fright. The same absolutely calm attitude, the same calm expression on his face. For the second time he raised his eyes to heaven, again he sighed, and smiled bitterly as he murmured:

"Tragediante!"

Bonaparte was at the farther end of the room, leaning against a marble chimney which was as high as he was tall. Like an arrow shot out of a bow, he rushed straight at the old man; I thought he was going to kill him as he sat. But he suddenly stopped short, seized a Sèvres vase on which the Capitol was painted, threw it on the hearth and

ground it under his heels. Then he remained terribly quiet.

I was relieved, for I felt that his reason had got the better of his temper. He became sad, and when he finally spoke in a deep voice, it was evident that in the two words uttered by the Pope he had recognized his true portrait.

"Miserable life!" he said. Then he fell into reverie, and without speaking tore the brim of his hat. When his voice again was heard he was talking to himself:

"It's true. Tragedian or comedian, I am always playing a part—all is costume and pose. How wearying it all is, and how belittling! Pose! pose! always pose! In one case full face, in another profile—but invariably for effect. Always trying to appear what others worship, so that I may deceive the fools, keeping them between hope and fear. Dazzling them by bulletins, by prestige. Master of all of them and not knowing what to do with them. That's the simple truth after all. And to make myself so miserable through it all! It really is too much. For," continued he, sitting down in an armchair and crossing his legs, "it bores me to death, the whole farce. As soon as I sit down I don't know what to do with myself. I can't even hunt for three days in succession at Fontainebleau with being weary of it. I must always be moving and making others move. I speak quite frankly. I have plans in my life which would require the lives of forty emperors to carry out, and I make new ones every morning and evening; my imagination is always on the *qui vive*; but before I have carried out two of them I shall be exhausted in body and mind; for our poor lamp of life doesn't burn long enough. And I must confess that if I could carry them out I should not find that the world was one whit better than it is now; but it *would* be better though, for it would be united. I am not a philosopher. I don't understand many theories. Life is too short to stop. As soon as I have an idea I put it into execution. Others will find reasons after me for praising me if I succeed and for abusing me if I fail. Differences of opinion are active—they abound in France—but I keep them down while I am alive—afterward—Well, no matter! It is my business to succeed, and that I intend

to do. Every day I make an Iliad by my actions—every day.”

Thereupon he rose quickly. In that moment he was lively and natural, and was not thinking of posing as he afterward did in St. Helena; he did not strive to make himself ideal or to pose for effect—he was himself outside of himself. He went back to the Pope, who had remained seated, and paced in front of him. Getting warmed up, he spoke with a dash of irony, at an incredible rate:

“Birth is everything. Those who come into the world poor and neglected are always desperate. That desperation turns to action or suicide according to character. When they have courage to attempt something as I have done, they raise the devil. But what else is to be done? One must live. One must find one’s place and make one’s mark. I have carried everything before me like a cannon-ball—all the worse for those who happened to be in my way. But what else could I have done? Each man eats according to his appetite, and I have an insatiable one. Do you know, Holy Father, at Toulon I had not wherewithal to buy myself a pair of epaulets, in place of which I had a mother and I don’t know how many brothers on my shoulders. They are all satisfactorily settled at present. Josephine married me out of pity in spite of her old notary, who objected that I owned nothing but my cap and cape, and now we are going to crown her. The old man was right, though, as to what I possessed at that time. Imperial mantle! Crown! what does all that mean? Is it mine? Costume! Actor’s costume! I will put them on for an hour and then I shall have had enough of them. Then I shall don my officer’s uniform, and ‘To horse’; all my life on horseback. I couldn’t pass a single day resting, without being in danger of falling out of the chair. I am to be envied? Eh?

“I repeat, Holy Father; there are only two classes of men in the world: those who have and those who gain.

“Those who are in the first class rest, the others are restless. As I learnt that lesson at an early age and to some purpose I shall go a long way. There are only two men

who have done anything before they were forty years old; Cromwell and Jean-Jacques; if you had given one a farm, and the other twelve hundred francs and his servant, they would neither have commanded nor preached nor written. There are workmen in buildings, in colors, in forms, and in phrases: I am a workman in battles. It's my business. At the age of thirty-five I have manufactured eighteen of them, which are called 'Victories.' I must be paid for my work. And a throne is certainly not extravagant payment. Besides, I shall always go on working. You will see that all dynasties will date from mine, although I am a mere parvenu. I am elected as you are, Holy Father—and drawn from the multitude. On this point we can well shake hands."

And, approaching the Pope, Napoleon held out his hand. Pius took the hand which was offered to him, but shook his head sadly, and I saw his fine eyes cloud with tears.

Bonaparte cast a hurried glance at the tears which he had wrung from the old Pope, and I surprised even a rapid motion in the corners of his mouth much resembling a smile of triumph. At that moment his intensely powerful and overbearing nature seemed to me less admirable than that of his saintly adversary; I blushed for all my past admiration of Napoleon; I felt a sadness creep over me at the thought that the grandest policy appears little when stained by tricks of vanity. I saw that the emperor had gained his end in the interview by having yielded nothing and by having drawn a sign of weakness from the Pope. He had wished to have the last word, and without uttering another syllable, he left the room as abruptly as he had entered. I could not see whether he saluted the Pope or not, but I do not think he did.

CROISILLES

(*Croisilles*)

By ALFRED DE MUSSET

I

AT the beginning of the reign of Louis XV., a young man named Croisilles, son of a goldsmith, was returning from Paris to Havre, his native town. He had been intrusted by his father with the transaction of some business, and his trip to the great city having turned out satisfactorily, the joy of bringing good news caused him to walk the sixty leagues more gaily and briskly than his wont; for, though he had a rather large sum of money in his pocket he travelled on foot for pleasure. He was a good-tempered fellow, and not without wit, but so very thoughtless and flighty that people looked upon him as being rather weak-minded. His doublet buttoned awry, his periwig flying to the wind, his hat under his arm, he followed the banks of the Seine, at times finding enjoyment in his own thoughts and again indulging in snatches of song; up at daybreak, supping at wayside inns, and always charmed with this stroll of his through one of the most beautiful regions of France. Plundering the apple-trees of Normandy on his way, he puzzled his brain to find rhymes (for all these rattle-pates are more or less poets), and tried hard to turn out a madrigal for a certain fair damsel of his native place. She was no less than a daughter of a *fermier-général*, Mademoiselle Godeau, the pearl of Havre, a rich heiress, and much courted. Croisilles was not received at M. Godeau's otherwise than in a casual sort of way, that is to say, he had sometimes himself

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taken there articles of jewelry purchased at his father's. M. Godeau, whose somewhat vulgar surname ill-fitted his immense fortune, avenged himself by his arrogance for the stigma of his birth, and showed himself on all occasions enormously and pitilessly rich. He certainly was not the man to allow the son of a goldsmith to enter his drawing-room; but, as Mademoiselle Godeau had the most beautiful eyes in the world, and Croisilles was not ill-favoured; and as nothing can prevent a fine fellow from falling in love with a pretty girl, Croisilles adored Mademoiselle Godeau, who did not seem vexed thereat. Thus was he thinking of her as he turned his steps toward Havre; and, as he had never reflected seriously upon anything, instead of thinking of the invincible obstacles which separated him from his lady-love, he busied himself only with finding a rhyme for the Christian name she bore. Mademoiselle Godeau was called Julie, and the rhyme was found easily enough. So Croisilles, having reached Honfleur, embarked with a satisfied heart, his money and his madrigal in his pocket, and as soon as he jumped ashore ran to the paternal house.

He found the shop closed, and knocked again and again, not without the astonishment and apprehension, for it was not a holiday; but nobody came. He called his father, but in vain. He went to a neighbour's to ask what had happened; instead of replying, the neighbour turned away, as though not wishing to recognize him. Croisilles repeated his questions; he learned that his father, his affairs having long been in an embarrassed condition, had just become bankrupt, and had fled to America, abandoning to his creditors all that he possessed.

Not realizing as yet the extent of his misfortune, Croisilles felt overwhelmed by the thought that he might never again see his father. It seemed to him incredible that he should be thus suddenly abandoned; he tried to force an entrance into the store; but was given to understand that the official seals had been affixed; so he sat down on a stone, and giving way to his grief, began to weep piteously, deaf to the consolations of those around him, never ceasing to call his father's name, though he knew him to be already far

away. At last he rose, ashamed at seeing a crowd about him, and, in the most profound despair, turned his steps toward the harbour.

On reaching the pier, he walked straight before him like a man in a trance, who knows neither where he is going, nor what is to become of him. He saw himself irretrievably lost, possessing no longer a shelter, no means of rescue and, of course, no longer any friends. Alone, wandering on the seashore, he felt tempted to drown himself, then and there. Just at the moment when, yielding to this thought, he was advancing to the edge of a high cliff, an old servant named Jean, who had served his family for a number of years, arrived on the scene.

"Ah! my poor Jean!" he exclaimed, "you know all that has happened since I went away. Is it possible that my father could leave us without warning, without farewell?"

"He is gone," answered Jean, "but indeed not without saying good-bye to you."

At the same time he drew from his pocket a letter, which he gave to his young master. Croisilles recognized the handwriting of his father, and, before opening the letter, kissed it rapturously; but it contained only a few words. Instead of feeling his trouble softened, it seemed to the young man still harder to bear. Honorable until then, and known as such, the old gentleman, ruined by an unforeseen disaster (the bankruptcy of a partner), had left for his son nothing but a few commonplace words of consolation, and no hope, except, perhaps, that vague hope, without aim or reason, which constitutes, it is said, the last possession one loses.

"Jean, my friend, you carried me in your arms," said Croisilles, when he had read the letter, "and you certainly are to-day the only being who loves me at all; it is a very sweet thing to me, but a very sad one for you; for, as sure as my father embarked there, I will throw myself into the same sea which is bearing him away; not before you, nor at once, but some day I will do it, for I am lost."

"What can you do?" replied Jean, not seeming to have understood, but holding fast to the skirt of Croisilles' coat; "What can you do, my dear master? Your father was de-

ceived; he was expecting money which did not come, and it was no small amount either. Could he stay here? I have seen him, sir, as he made his fortune, during the thirty years that I have served him; I have seen him working, attending to his business, the crown-pieces coming in one by one. He was an honorable man, and skilful; they took a cruel advantage of him. Within the last few days, I was still there, and as fast as the crowns came in, I saw them go out of the shop again. Your father paid all he could, for a whole day, and, when his desk was empty, he could not help telling me, pointing to a drawer where but six francs remained: 'There were a hundred thousand francs there this morning!' That does not look like a rascally failure, sir? There is nothing in it that can dishonour you."

"I have no more doubt of my father's integrity," answered Croisilles, "than I have of his misfortune. Neither do I doubt his affection. But I wish I could have kissed him, for what is to become of me? I am not accustomed to poverty, I have not the necessary cleverness to build up my fortune. And, if I had it, my father is gone. It took him thirty years, how long would it take me to repair this disaster? Much longer. And will he be living then? Certainly not; he will die over there, and I cannot even go and find him; I can join him only by dying."

Utterly distressed as Croisilles was, he possessed much religious feeling. Although his despondency made him wish for death, he hesitated to take his life. At the first words of this interview, he had taken hold of old Jean's arm, and thus both returned to the town. When they had entered the streets and the sea was no longer so near:

"It seems to me, sir," said Jean, "that a good man has a right to live and that a misfortune proves nothing. Since your father has not killed himself, thank God, how can you think of dying? Since there is no dishonour in his case, and all the town knows it is so, what would they think of you? That you felt unable to endure poverty. It would be neither brave nor Christian; for, at the very worst, what is there to frighten you? There are plenty of people born poor, and who have never had either mother or father to help them

on. I know that we are not all alike, but, after all, nothing is impossible to God. What would you do in such a case? Your father was not born rich, far from it,—meaning no offence—and that is perhaps what consoles him now. If you had been here, this last month, it would have given you courage. Yes, sir, a man may be ruined, nobody is secure from bankruptcy; but your father, I make bold to say, has borne himself, through it all, like a man, though he did leave us so hastily. But what could he do? It is not every day that a vessel starts for America. I accompanied him to the wharf, and if you had seen how sad he was! How he charged me to take care of you; to send him news from you!—Sir, it is a right poor idea you have, that throwing the helve after the hatchet. Every one has his time of trial in the world, and I was a soldier before I was a servant. I suffered severely at the time, but I was young; I was of your age, sir, and it seemed to me that Providence could not have spoken His last word to a young man of twenty-five. Why do you wish to prevent the kind God from repairing the evil that has befallen you? Give Him time, and all will come right. If I might advise you, I would say, just wait two or three years, and I will answer for it, you will come out all right. It is always easy to go out of this world. Why will you seize an unlucky moment?"

While Jean was thus exerting himself to persuade his master, the latter walked in silence, and, as those who suffer often do, was looking this way and that as though seeking for something which might bind him to life. As chance would have it, at this juncture, Mademoiselle Godeau, the daughter of the *fermier-général*, happened to pass with her governess. The mansion in which she lived was not far distant; Croisilles saw her enter it. This meeting produced on him more effect than all the reasonings in the world. I have said that he was rather erratic, and nearly always yielded to the first impulse. Without hesitating an instant, and without explanation, he suddenly left the arm of his old servant, and crossing the street, knocked at Monsieur Godeau's door.

II

WHEN we try to picture to ourselves, nowadays, what was called a "financier" in times gone by, we invariably imagine enormous corpulence, short legs, a gigantic wig, and a broad face with a triple chin,—and it is not without reason that we have become accustomed to form such a picture of such a personage. Everyone knows to what great abuses the royal tax-farming led, and it seems as though there were a law of nature which renders fatter than the rest of mankind those who fatten, not only upon their own laziness, but also upon the work of others.

Monsieur Godeau, among financiers, was one of the most classical to be found,—that is to say, one of the fattest. At the present time he had the gout, which was nearly as fashionable in his day as the nervous headache is in ours. Stretched upon a lounge, his eyes half-closed, he was coddling himself in the coziest corner of a dainty boudoir. The panel-mirrors which surrounded him, majestically duplicated on every side his enormous person; bags filled with gold covered the table; around him, the furniture, the wainscot, the doors, the locks, the mantel-piece, the ceiling were gilded; so was his coat. I do not know but that his brain was gilded too. He was calculating the issue of a little business affair which could not fail to bring him a few thousand louis; and was even deigning to smile over it to himself when Croisilles was announced. The young man entered with an humble, but resolute air, and with every outward manifestation of that inward tumult with which we find no difficulty in crediting a man who is longing to drown himself. Monsieur Godeau was a little surprised at this unexpected visit; then he thought his daughter had been buying some trifle, and was confirmed in that thought by seeing her appear almost at the same time with the young man. He made a sign to Croisilles not to sit down but to speak. The young lady seated herself on a sofa, and Croisilles, remaining standing, expressed himself in these terms:

"Sir, my father has failed. The bankruptcy of a partner has forced him to suspend his payments, and unable to wit-

ness his own shame, he has fled to America, after having paid his last sou to his creditors. I was absent when all this happened; I have just come back and have known of these events only two hours. I am absolutely without resources, and determined to die. It is very probable that, on leaving your house, I shall throw myself into the water. In all probability, I would already have done so, if I had not chanced to meet, at the very moment, this young lady, your daughter. I love her, sir, from the very depths of my heart; for two years I have been in love with her, and my silence, until now, proves better than anything else the respect I feel for her; but to-day, in declaring my passion to you, I fulfill an imperative duty, and I would think I was offending God, if, before giving myself over to death, I did not come to ask you Mademoiselle Julie in marriage. I have not the slightest hope that you will grant this request; but I have to make it, nevertheless, for I am a good Christian, sir, and when a good Christian sees himself come to such a point of misery that he can no longer suffer life, he must at last, to extenuate his crime, exhaust all the chances which remain to him before taking the final and fatal step."

At the beginning of this speech, Monsieur Godeau had supposed that the young man came to borrow money, and so he prudently threw his handkerchief over the bags that were lying around him, preparing in advance a refusal, and a polite one, for he always felt some good-will toward the father of Croisilles. But when he had heard the young man to the end, and understood the purport of his visit, he never doubted one moment but that the poor fellow had gone completely mad. He was at first tempted to ring the bell and have him put out; but, noticing his firm demeanor, his determined look, the *fermier-général* took pity on so inoffensive a case of insanity. He merely told his daughter to retire, so that she might be no longer exposed to hearing such improprieties.

While Croisilles was speaking, Mademoiselle Godeau had blushed as a peach in the month of August. At her father's bidding, she retired. the young man making her a profound

bow, which she did not seem to notice. Left alone with Croisilles, Monsieur Godeau coughed, rose, and trying to assume a paternal air, delivered himself to the following effect.

"My boy," said he, "I am willing to believe that you are not poking fun at me, but you have really lost your head. I not only excuse this proceeding, but I consent not to punish you for it. I am sorry that your poor devil of a father has become bankrupt and has skipped. It is indeed very sad, and I quite understand that such a misfortune should affect your brain. Besides, I wish to do something for you; so take this stool and sit down there."

"It is useless, sir," answered Croisilles; "if you refuse me, as I see you do, I have nothing left but to take my leave. I wish you every good fortune."

"And where are you going?"

"To write to my father and say good-bye to him."

"Eh! the devil! Any one would swear you were speaking the truth. I'll be damned if I don't think you are going to drown yourself."

"Yes, sir; at least I think so, if my courage does not forsake me."

"That's a bright idea! Fie on you! How can you be such a fool? Sit down, sir, I tell you, and listen to me."

Monsieur Godeau had just made a very wise reflection, which was that it is never agreeable to have it said that a man, whoever he may be, threw himself into the water on leaving your house. He therefore coughed once more, took his snuff-box, cast a careless glance upon his shirt-frill, and continued:

"It is evident that you are nothing but a simpleton, a fool, a regular baby. You do not know what you are saying. You are ruined, that's what has happened to you. But, my dear friend, all that is not enough; one must reflect upon the things of this world. If you came to ask me—well, good advice, for instance,—I might give it to you; but what is it you are after? You are in love with my daughter?"

"Yes, sir, and I repeat to you, that I am far from sup-

posing that you can give her to me in marriage; but as there is nothing in the world but that, which could prevent me from dying, if you believe in God, as I do not doubt you do, you will understand the reason that brings me here."

"Whether I believe in God or not, is no business of yours. I do not intend to be questioned. Answer me first: where have you seen my daughter?"

"In my father's shop, and in this house, when I brought jewelry for Mademoiselle Julie."

"Who told you her name was Julie? What are we coming to, great heavens! But be her name Julie or Javotte, do you know what is wanted in any one who aspires to the hand of the daughter of a *fermier-général*?"

"No, I am completely ignorant of it, unless it is to be as rich as she."

"Something more is necessary, my boy; you must have a name."

"Well! my name is Croisilles."

"Your name is *Croisilles*, poor wretch! Do you call that a name?"

"Upon my soul and conscience, sir, it seems to me to be as good a name as Godeau."

"You are very impertinent, sir, and you shall rue it."

"Indeed, sir, do not be angry; I had not the least idea of offending you, and wish to punish me for it, there is no need to get angry. Have I not told you that on leaving here I am going straight to drown myself?"

Although M. Godeau had promised himself to send Croisilles away as gently as possible, in order to avoid all scandal, his prudence could not resist the vexation of his wounded pride. The interview to which he had to resign himself was monstrous enough in itself; it may be imagined then, what he felt at hearing himself spoken to in such terms.

"Listen," he said, almost beside himself, and determined to close the matter at any cost. "You are not such a fool that you cannot understand a word of common sense. Are you rich? No. Are you noble? Still less so. What is this frenzy that brings you here? You come to worry me, you think you are doing something clever; you know per-

fectly well that it is useless; you wish to make me responsible for your death. Have you any right to complain of me? Do I owe a sou to your father? Is it my fault that you have come to this? Mon Dieu! When a man is going to drown himself, he keeps about it——”

“That is what I am going to do now. I am your very humble servant.”

“One moment! It shall not be said that you had recourse to me in vain. There, my boy, here are three louis d’or; go and have dinner in the kitchen, and let me hear no more about you.”

“Much obliged; I am not hungry, and I have no use for your money.”

So Croisilles left the room, and the financier, having set his conscience at rest by the offer he had just made, settled himself more comfortably in his chair, and resumed his meditations.

Mademoiselle Godeau, during this time, was not so far away as one might suppose; she had, it is true, withdrawn in obedience to her father; but, instead of going to her room, she had remained listening behind the door. If the extravagance of Croisilles seemed incredible to her, still she found nothing to offend her in it; for love, since the world has existed, has never passed as an insult. On the other hand, as it was not possible to doubt the despair of the young man, Mademoiselle Godeau found herself a victim, at one and the same time, to the two sentiments most dangerous to women—compassion and curiosity. When she saw the interview at an end, and Croisilles ready to come out, she rapidly crossed the drawing-room where she stood, not wishing to be surprised eavesdropping, and hurried towards her apartment; but she almost immediately retraced her steps. The idea that perhaps Croisilles was really going to put an end to his life troubled her in spite of herself. Scarcely aware of what she was doing, she walked to meet him; the drawing-room was large, and the two young people came slowly towards each other. Croisilles was as pale as death, and Mademoiselle Godeau vainly sought words to express her feelings. In passing beside him, she let fall on the floor

a bunch of violets which she held in her hand. He at once bent down and picked up the bouquet in order to give it back to her, but instead of taking it, she passed on without uttering a word, and entered her father's room. Croisilles, alone again, put the flowers in his breast, and left the house with a troubled heart, not knowing what to think of his adventure.

III

SCARCELY had he taken a few steps in the street, when he saw his faithful friend Jean running towards him with a joyful face.

"What has happened?" he asked; "have you news to tell me?"

"Yes," replied Jean; "I have to tell you that the seals have been officially broken and that you can enter your home. All your father's debts being paid, you remain the owner of the house. It is true that all the money and all the jewels have been taken away; but at least the house belongs to you, and you have not lost everything. I have been running about for an hour, not knowing what had become of you, and I hope, my dear master, that you will now be wise enough to take a reasonable course."

"What course do you wish me to take?"

"Sell this house, sir, it is all our fortune. It will bring you about thirty thousand francs. With that at any rate you will not die of hunger; and what is to prevent you from buying a little stock in trade, and starting business for yourself? You would surely prosper."

"We shall see about this," answered Croisilles, as he hurried to the street where his home was. He was eager to see the paternal roof again. But when he arrived there so sad a spectacle met his gaze, that he had scarcely the courage to enter. The shop was in utter disorder, the rooms deserted, his father's alcove empty. Everything presented to his eyes the wretchedness of utter ruin. Not a chair remained; all the drawers had been ransacked, the till broken open, the chest taken away; nothing had escaped the greedy

search of creditors and lawyers; who, after having pillaged the house, had gone, leaving the doors open, as though to testify to all passers-by how neatly their work was done.

"This, then," exclaimed Croisilles, "is all that remains after thirty years of work and a respectable life,—and all through the failure to have ready, on a given day, money enough to honour a signature imprudently given!"

While the young man walked up and down given over to the saddest thoughts, Jean seemed very much embarrassed. He supposed that his master was without ready money, and that he might perhaps not even have dined. He was therefore trying to think of some way to question him on the subject, and to offer him, in case of need, some part of his savings. After having tortured his mind for a quarter of an hour to try and hit upon some way of leading up to the subject, he could find nothing better than to come up to Croisilles, and ask him, in a kindly voice:

"Sir, do you still like roast partridges?"

The poor man uttered this question in a tone at once so comical and so touching, that Croisilles, in spite of his sadness, could not refrain from laughing.

"And why do you ask me that?" said he.

"My wife," replied Jean, "is cooking me some for dinner, sir, and if by chance you still liked them——"

Croisilles had completely forgotten till now the money which he was bringing back to his father. Jean's proposal reminded him that his pockets were full of gold.

"I thank you with all my heart," said he to the old man, "and I accept your dinner with pleasure; but, if you are anxious about my fortune, be reassured. I have more money than I need to have a good supper this evening, which you, in your turn, will share with me."

Saying this, he laid upon the mantel four well-filled purses, which he emptied, each containing fifty louis.

"Although this sum does not belong to me," he added, "I can use it for a day or two. To whom must I go to have it forwarded to my father?"

"Sir," replied Jean, eagerly, "your father especially charged me to tell you that this money belongs to you, and,

if I did not speak of it before, it was because I did not know how your affairs in Paris had turned out. Where he has gone your father will want for nothing; he will lodge with one of your correspondents, who will receive him most gladly; he has moreover taken with him enough for his immediate needs, for he was quite sure of still leaving behind more than was necessary to pay all his just debts. All that he has left, sir, is yours; he says so himself in his letter, and I am especially charged to repeat it to you. That gold is, therefore, legitimately your property, as this house in which we are now. I can repeat to you the very words your father said to me on embarking: 'May my son forgive me for leaving him; may he remember that I am still in the world only to love me, and let him use what remains after my debts are paid as though it were his inheritance.' Those, sir, are his own expressions; so put this back in your pocket, and, since you accept my dinner, pray let us go home."

The honest joy which shone in Jean's eyes, left no doubt in the mind of Croisilles. The words of his father had moved him to such a point that he could not restrain his tears; on the other hand, at such a moment, four thousand francs were no bagatelle. As to the house, it was not an available resource, for one could realize on it only by selling it, and that was both difficult and slow. All this, however, could not but make a considerable change in the situation the young man found himself in; so he felt suddenly moved—shaken in his dismal resolution, and, so to speak, both sad and, at the same time, relieved of much of his distress. After having closed the shutters of the shop, he left the house with Jean, and as he once more crossed the town, could not help thinking how small a thing our affections are, since they sometimes serve to make us find an unforeseen joy in the faintest ray of hope. It was with this thought that he sat down to dinner beside his old servant, who did not fail, during the repast, to make every effort to cheer him.

Heedless people have a happy fault. They are easily cast down, but they have not even the trouble to console themselves, so changeable is their mind. It would be a mistake to think them, on that account, insensible or selfish; on the

contrary they perhaps feel more keenly than others and are but too prone to blow their brains out in a moment of despair; but, this moment once passed, if they are still alive, they must dine, they must eat, they must drink, as usual; only to melt into tears again, at bed-time. Joy and pain do not glide over them but pierce them through like arrows. Kind, hot-headed natures which know how to suffer, but not how to lie, through which one can clearly read,—not fragile and empty like glass, but solid and transparent like rock crystal.

After having clinked glasses with Jean, Croisilles, instead of drowning himself, went to the play. Standing at the back of the pit, he drew from his bosom Mademoiselle Godeau's bouquet, and, as he breathed the perfume in deep meditation, he began to think in a calmer spirit about his adventure of the morning. As soon as he had pondered over it for awhile, he saw clearly the truth; that is to say, that the young lady, in leaving the bouquet in his hands, and in refusing to take it back, had wished to give him a mark of interest; for otherwise this refusal and this silence could it perhaps something of still less importance,—mere commonplace pity? Had Mademoiselle Godeau feared to see *him* die—him, Croisilles—or merely to be the cause of the death of a man, no matter what man? Although withered and almost leafless, the bouquet still retained so exquisite an odour and so brave a look, that in breathing it and looking at it, Croisilles could not help hoping. It was a thin garland of roses round a bunch of violets. What mysterious depths of sentiment an Oriental might have read in these flowers, by interpreting their language! But after all, he need not be an Oriental in this case. The flowers which fall from the breast of a pretty woman, in Europe, as in the East, are never mute; were they but to tell what they have seen while reposing in that lovely bosom, it would be enough for a lover, and this, in fact, they do. Perfumes have more than one resemblance to love, and there are even people who think love to be but a sort of perfume; it is true the flowers which exhale it are the most beautiful in creation.

While Croisilles mused thus, paying very little attention to the tragedy that was being acted at the time, Mademoiselle Godeau herself appeared in a box opposite.

The idea did not occur to the young man that, if she should notice him, she might think it strange to find the would-be suicide there after what had transpired in the morning. He, on the contrary, bent all his efforts towards getting nearer to her; but he could not succeed. A fifth-rate actress from Paris had come to play *Mérope*, and the crowd was so dense that one could not move. For lack of anything better, Croisilles had to content himself with fixing his gaze upon his lady-love, not lifting his eyes from her for a moment. He noticed that she seemed preoccupied and moody, and that she spoke to every one with a sort of repugnance. Her box was surrounded, as may be imagined, by all the fops of the neighbourhood, each of whom passed several times before her in the gallery, totally unable to enter the box, of which her father filled more than three-fourths. Croisilles noticed further that she was not using her opera-glasses, nor was she listening to the play. Her elbows resting on the balustrade, her chin in her hand, with her far-away look, she seemed, in all her sumptuous apparel, like some statue of Venus disguised *en marquise*. The display of her dress and her hair, her rouge, beneath which one could guess her paleness, all the splendour of her toilet, did but the more distinctly bring out the immobility of her countenance. Never had Croisilles seen her so beautiful. Having found means, between the acts, to escape from the crush, he hurried off to look at her from the passage leading to her box, and, strange to say, scarcely had he reached it, when Mademoiselle Godeau, who had not stirred for the last hour, turned round. She started slightly as she noticed him and only cast a glance at him; then she resumed her former attitude. Whether that glance expressed surprise, anxiety, pleasure or love; whether it meant "What, not dead!" or "God be praised! There you are, living!"—I do not pretend to explain. Be that as it may; at that glance, Croisilles inwardly swore to himself to die or gain her love.

IV

Of all the obstacles which hinder the smooth course of love, the greatest is, without doubt, what is called false shame, which is indeed a very potent obstacle.

Croisilles was not troubled with this unhappy failing, which both pride and timidity combine to produce; he was not one of those who, for whole months, hover round the woman they love, like a cat round a caged bird. As soon as he had given up the idea of drowning himself, he thought only of letting his dear Julie know that he lived solely for her. But how could he tell her so? Should he present himself a second time at the mansion of the *fermier-général*, it was but too certain that M. Godeau would have him ejected. Julie, when she happened to take a walk, never went without her maid; it was therefore useless to undertake to follow her. To pass the nights under the windows of one's beloved is a folly dear to lovers, but, in the present case, it would certainly prove vain. I said before that Croisilles was very religious; it therefore never entered his mind to seek to meet his lady-love at church. As the best way, though the most dangerous, is to write to people when one cannot speak to them in person, he decided on the very next day to write to the young lady.

His letter possessed, naturally, neither order nor reason. It read somewhat as follows:

"MADEMOISELLE:

"Tell me exactly, I beg of you, what fortune one must possess to be able to pretend to your hand. I am asking you a strange question; but I love you so desperately, that it is impossible for me not to ask it, and you are the only person in the world to whom I can address it. It seemed to me, last evening, that you looked at me at the play. I had wished to die; would to God I were indeed dead, if I am mistaken, and if that look was not meant for me. Tell me if Fate can be so cruel as to let a man deceive himself in a manner at once so sad and so sweet. I believe that you commanded me to live. You are rich, beautiful. I know it. Your

father is arrogant and miserly, and you have a right to be proud; but I love you, and the rest is a dream. Fix your charming eyes on me; think of what love can do, when I who suffer so cruelly, who must stand in fear of everything, feel, nevertheless, an inexpressible joy in writing you this mad letter, which will perhaps bring down your anger upon me. But think also, mademoiselle, that you are a little to blame for this, my folly. Why did you drop that bouquet? Put yourself for an instant, if possible, in my place; I dare think that you love me, and I dare ask you to tell me so. Forgive me, I beseech you. I would give my life's blood to be sure of not offending you, and to see you listening to my love with that angel smile which belongs only to you.

"Whatever you may do, your image remains mine; you can remove it only by tearing out my heart. As long as your look lives in my remembrance, as long as the bouquet keeps a trace of its perfume, as long as a word will tell of love, I will cherish hope."

Having sealed his letter, Croisilles went out and walked up and down the street opposite the Godeau mansion, waiting for a servant to come out. Chance, which always serves mysterious loves, when it can do so without compromising itself, willed it that Mademoiselle Julie's maid should have arranged to purchase a cap on that day. She was going to the milliner's when Croisilles accosted her, slipped a louis into her hand, and asked her to take charge of his letter. The bargain was soon struck; the servant took the money to pay for her cap and promised to do the errand out of gratitude. Croisilles, full of joy, went home and sat at his door awaiting an answer.

Before speaking of this answer, a word must be said about Mademoiselle Godeau. She was not quite free from the vanity of her father, but her good nature was ever uppermost. She was, in the full meaning of the term, a spoilt child. She habitually spoke very little, and never was she seen with a needle in her hand; she spent her days at her toilet, and her evenings on the sofa, not seeming to hear the conversation going on around her. As regards her dress,

she was prodigiously coquettish, and her own face was surely what she thought most of on earth. A wrinkle in her collarette, an ink-spot on her finger, would have distressed her; and, when her dress pleased her, nothing can describe the last look which she cast at her mirror before leaving the room. She showed neither taste nor aversion for the pleasures in which young ladies usually delight. She went to balls willingly enough, and renounced going to them without a show of temper, sometimes without motive. The play wearied her, and she was in the constant habit of falling asleep there. When her father, who worshipped her, proposed to make her some present of her own choice, she took an hour to decide, not being able to think of anything she cared for. When M. Godeau gave a reception or a dinner, it often happened that Julie would not appear in the drawing-room, and at such times she passed the evening alone in her own room, in full dress, walking up and down, her fan in her hand. If a compliment was addressed to her, she turned away her head, and if any one attempted to pay court to her, she responded only by a look at once so dazzling and so serious as to disconcert even the boldest. Never had a sally made her laugh; never had an air in an opera, a flight of tragedy, moved her; indeed, never had her heart given a sign of life; and, on seeing her pass in all the splendour of her nonchalant loveliness one might have taken her for a beautiful somnambulist, walking through the world as in a trance.

So much indifference and coquetry did not seem easy to understand. Some said she loved nothing, others that she loved nothing but herself. A single word, however, suffices to explain her character,—she was waiting. From the age of fourteen she had heard it ceaselessly repeated that nothing was so charming as she. She was convinced of this, and that was why she paid so much attention to dress. In failing to do honour to her own person, she would have thought herself guilty of sacrilege. She walked, in her beauty, so to speak, like a child in its holiday dress; but she was very far from thinking that her beauty was to remain useless. Beneath her apparent unconcern she had a will, secret, in-

flexible, and the more potent the better it was concealed. The coquetry of ordinary women, which spends itself in ogling, in simpering, and in smiling, seemed to her a childish, vain, almost contemptible way of fighting with shadows. She felt herself in possession of a treasure, and she disdained to stake it piece by piece; she needed an adversary worthy of herself; but, too accustomed to see her wishes anticipated, she did not seek that adversary; it may even be said that she felt astonished at his failing to present himself. For the four or five years that she had been out in society and had conscientiously displayed her flowers, her furbelows, and her beautiful shoulders, it seemed to her inconceivable that she had not yet inspired some great passion. Had she said what was really behind her thoughts, she certainly would have replied to her many flatterers: "Well! if it is true that I am so beautiful, why do you not blow your brains out for me?" An answer which many other young girls might make, and which more than one who says nothing hides away in a corner of her heart, not far perhaps from the tip of her tongue.

What is there, indeed, in the world, more tantalizing for a woman than to be young, rich, beautiful, to look at herself in her mirror and see herself charmingly dressed, worthy in every way to please, fully disposed to allow herself to be loved, and to have to say to herself: "I am admired, I am praised, all the world thinks me charming, but nobody loves me. My gown is by the best maker, my laces are superb, my coiffure is irreproachable, my face the most beautiful on earth, my figure slender, my foot prettily turned, and all this helps me to nothing but to go and yawn in the corner of some drawing-room! If a young man speaks to me he treats me as a child; if I am asked in marriage, it is for my dowry; if somebody presses my hand in a dance, it is sure to be some provincial fop; as soon as I appear anywhere, I excite a murmur of admiration; but nobody speaks low, in my ear, a word that makes my heart beat. I hear impertinent men praising me in loud tones, a couple of feet away, and never a look of humbly sincere adoration meets mine. Still I have an ardent soul full of life, and I am not,

by any means, only a pretty doll to be shown about, to be made to dance at a ball, to be dressed by a maid in the morning and undressed at night—beginning the whole thing over again the next day.”

That is what Mademoiselle Godeau had many times said to herself; and there were hours when that thought inspired her with so gloomy a feeling that she remained mute and almost motionless for a whole day. When Croisilles wrote her, she was in just such a fit of ill-humour. She had just been taking her chocolate and was deep in meditation, stretched upon a lounge, when her maid entered and handed her the letter with a mysterious air. She looked at the address, and not recognizing the handwriting, fell again to musing. The maid then saw herself forced to explain what it was, which she did with a rather disconcerted air, not being at all sure how the young lady would take the matter. Mademoiselle Godeau listened without moving, then opened the letter, and cast only a glance at it; she at once asked for a sheet of paper, and nonchalantly wrote these few words:

“No, sir, I assure you I am not proud. If you had only a hundred thousand crowns, I would willingly marry you.”

Such was the reply which the maid at once took to Croisilles, who gave her another louis for her trouble.

V

A HUNDRED thousand crowns are not found “in a donkey’s hoof-print,” and if Croisilles had been suspicious he might have thought in reading Mademoiselle Godeau’s letter that she was either crazy or laughing at him. He thought neither, for he only saw in it that his darling Julie loved him, and that he must have a hundred thousand crowns, and he dreamed from that moment of nothing but trying to secure them.

He possessed two hundred louis in cash, plus a house which, as I have said, might be worth about thirty thousand francs. What was to be done? How was he to go about transfiguring these thirtyfour thousand francs, at a jump, into three hundred thousand. The first idea which came

into the mind of the young man was to find some way of staking his whole fortune on the toss-up of a coin, but for that he must sell the house. Croisilles therefore began by putting a notice upon the door, stating that his house was for sale; then, while dreaming what he would do with the money that he would get for it, he awaited a purchaser.

A week went by, then another; not a single purchaser applied. More and more distressed, Croisilles spent these days with Jean, and despair was taking possession of him once more, when a Jewish broker rang at the door.

"This house is for sale, sir, is it not? Are you the owner of it?"

"Yes, sir."

"And how much is it worth?"

"Thirty thousand francs, I believe; at least I have heard my father say so."

The Jew visited all the rooms, went upstairs and down into the cellar, knocking on the walls, counting the steps of the staircase, turning the doors on their hinges and the keys in their locks, opening and closing the windows; then, at last, after having thoroughly examined everything, without saying a word and without making the slightest proposal, he bowed to Croisilles and retired.

Croisilles, who for a whole hour had followed him with a palpitating heart, as may be imagined, was not a little disappointed at this silent retreat. He thought that perhaps the Jew had wished to give himself time to reflect and that he would return presently. He waited a week for him, not daring to go out for fear of missing his visit, and looking out of the windows from morning till night. But it was in vain; the Jew did not reappear. Jean, true to his unpleasant rôle of adviser, brought moral pressure to bear to dissuade his master from selling his house in so hasty a manner and for so extravagant a purpose. Dying of impatience, ennui, and love, Croisilles one morning took his two hundred louis and went out, determined to tempt fortune with this sum, since he could not have more.

The gaming-houses at that time were not public, and that refinement of civilization which enables the first comer to

ruin himself at all hours, as soon as the wish enters his mind, had not yet been invented.

Scarcely was Croisilles in the street before he stopped, not knowing where to go to stake his money. He looked at the houses of the neighbourhood, and eyed them, one after the other, striving to discover suspicious appearances that might point out to him the object of his search. A good-looking young man, splendidly dressed, happened to pass. Judging from his mien, he was certainly a young man of gentle blood and ample leisure, so Croisilles politely accosted him.

"Sir," he said, "I beg your pardon for the liberty I take. I have two hundred louis in my pocket and I am dying either to lose them or win more. Could you not point out to me some respectable place where such things are done?"

At this rather strange speech the young man burst out laughing.

"Upon my word, sir!" answered he, "if you are seeking any such wicked place you have but to follow me, for that is just where I am going."

Croisilles followed him, and a few steps farther they both entered a house of very attractive appearance, where they were received hospitably by an old gentleman of the highest breeding. Several young men were already seated round a green cloth; Croisilles modestly took a place there, and in less than an hour his two hundred louis were gone.

He came out as sad as a lover can be who thinks himself beloved. He had not enough to dine with, but that did not cause him any anxiety.

"What can I do now," he asked himself, "to get money? To whom shall I address myself in this town? Who will lend me even a hundred louis on this house that I can not sell?"

While he was in this quandary, he met his Jewish broker. He did not hesitate to address him, and, featherhead as he was did not fail to tell him the plight he was in.

The Jew did not much want to buy the house; he had come to see it only through curiosity, or, to speak more exactly, for the satisfaction of his own conscience, as a pass-

ing dog goes into a kitchen, the door of which stands open, to see if there is nothing to steal. But when he saw Croisilles so despondent, so sad, so bereft of all resources, he could not resist the temptation to put himself to some inconvenience, even, in order to pay for the house. He therefore offered him about one-fourth of its value. Croisilles fell upon his neck, called him his friend and saviour, blindly signed a bargain that would have made one's hair stand on end, and, on the very next day, the possessor of four hundred new louis, he once more turned his steps toward the gambling-house where he had been so politely and speedily ruined the night before.

On his way, he passed by the wharf. A vessel was about leaving; the wind was gentle, the ocean tranquil. On all sides, merchants, sailors, officers in uniform were coming and going. Porters were carrying enormous bales of merchandise. Passengers and their friends were exchanging farewells, small boats were rowing about in all directions; on every face could be read fear, impatience, or hope; and, amidst all the agitation which surrounded it, the majestic vessel swayed gently to and fro under the wind that swelled her proud sails.

"What a grand thing it is," thought Croisilles, "to risk all one possesses and go beyond the sea, in perilous search of fortune! How it fills me with emotion to look at this vessel setting out on her voyage, loaded with so much wealth, with the welfare of so many families! What joy to see her come back again, bringing twice as much as was intrusted to her, returning so much prouder and richer than she went away! Why am I not one of those merchants? Why could I not stake my four hundred louis in this way? This immense seal! What a green cloth, on which to boldly tempt fortune! Why should I not myself buy a few bales of cloth or silk? What is to prevent my doing so, since I have gold? Why should this captain refuse to take charge of my merchandise? And who knows? Instead of going and throwing away this—my little all—in a gambling-house, I might double it, I might triple it, perhaps, by honest industry. If Julie truly loves me, she will wait a few years

she will remain true to me until I am able to marry her. Commerce sometimes yields greater profits than one thinks; examples are not wanting in this world of wealth gained with astonishing rapidity in this way on the changing waves—why should Providence not bless an endeavour made for a purpose so laudable, so worthy of His assistance? Among these merchants who have accumulated so much and who send their vessels to the ends of the world, more than one has begun with a smaller sum than I have now. They have prospered with the help of God; why should I not prosper in my turn? It seems to me as though a good wind were filling these sails, and this vessel inspires confidence. Come! the die is cast; I will speak to the captain, who seems to be a good fellow; I will then write to Julie, and set out to become a clever and successful trader.”

The greatest danger incurred by those who are habitually but half crazy, is that of becoming, at times, altogether so. The poor fellow, without further deliberation, put his whim into execution. To find goods to buy, when one has money and knows nothing about the goods, is the easiest thing in the world. The captain, to oblige Croisilles, took him to one of his friends, a manufacturer, who sold him as much cloth and silk as he could pay for. The whole of it, loaded upon a cart, was promptly taken on board. Croisilles, delighted and full of hope, had himself written in large letters his name upon the bales. He watched them being put on board with inexpressible joy; the hour of departure soon came, and the vessel weighed anchor.

VI

I NEED not say that, in this transaction, Croisilles had kept no money in hand. His house was sold; and there remained to him, for his sole fortune, the clothes he had on his back;—no home, and not a sou. With the best will possible, Jean could not suppose that his master was reduced to such an extremity; Croisilles was not too proud, but too thoughtless to tell him of it. So he determined to sleep under the starry vault, and as for his meals, he made

the following calculation: he presumed that the vessel which bore his fortune would be six months before coming back to Havre; Croisilles, therefore, not without regret, sold a gold watch his father had given him, and which he had fortunately kept; he got thirty-six livres for it. That was sufficient to live on for about six months, at the rate of four sous a day. He did not doubt that it would be enough, and, reassured for the present, he wrote to Mademoiselle Godeau to inform her of what he had done. He was very careful in his letter not to speak of his distress; he announced to her, on the contrary, that he had undertaken a magnificent commercial enterprise, of the speedy and fortunate issue of which there could be no doubt; he explained to her that *La Fleurette*, a merchant-vessel of one hundred and fifty tons, was carrying to the Baltic his cloths and his silks, and implored her to remain faithful to him for a year, reserving to himself the right of asking, later on, for a further delay, while, for his part, he swore eternal love to her.

When Mademoiselle Godeau received this letter, she was sitting before the fire, and had in her hand, using it as a screen, one of those bulletins which are printed in seaports, announcing the arrival and departure of vessels, and which also report disasters at sea. It had never occurred to her, as one can well imagine, to take an interest in this sort of thing; she had in fact never glanced at any of these sheets. The perusal of Croisilles' letter prompted her to read the bulletin she had been holding in her hand; the first word that caught her eye was no other than the name of *La Fleurette*.—The vessel had been wrecked on the coast of France, on the very night following its departure. The crew had barely escaped, but all the cargo was lost.

Mademoiselle Godeau, at this news, no longer remembered that Croisilles had made to her an avowal of his poverty; she was as heartbroken as though a million had been at stake. In an instant, the horrors of the tempest, the fury of the winds, the cries of the drowning, the ruin of the man who loved her, presented themselves to her mind like a scene in a romance. The bulletin and the letter fell from her hands. She rose in great agitation and, with heaving breast

and eyes brimming with tears, paced up and down, determined to act, and asking herself how she should act.

There is one thing that must be said in justice to love; it is that the stronger, the clearer, the simpler the considerations opposed to it, in a word, the less commonsense there is in the matter, the wilder does the passion become and the more does the lover love. It is one of the most beautiful things under heaven, this irrationality of the heart. We should not be worth much without it. After having walked about the room (without forgetting either her dear fan or the passing glance at the mirror), Julie allowed herself to sink once more upon her lounge. Whoever had seen her at this moment would have looked upon a lovely sight; her eyes sparkled, her cheeks were on fire; she sighed deeply, and murmured in a delicious transport of joy and pain:

"Poor fellow! He has ruined himself for me!"

Independently of the fortune which she could expect from her father, Mademoiselle Godeau had in her own right the property her mother had left her. She had never thought of it. At this moment, for the first time in her life, she remembered that she could dispose of five hundred thousand francs. This thought brought a smile to her lips; a project, strange, bold, wholly feminine, almost as mad as Croisilles himself, entered her head;—she weighed the idea in her mind for some time, then decided to act upon it at once.

She began by inquiring whether Croisilles had any relatives or friends; the maid was sent out in all directions to find out. Having made minute inquiries in all quarters, she discovered, on the fourth floor of an old rickety house, a half-crippled aunt, who never stirred from her arm-chair, and had not been out for four or five years. This poor woman, very old, seemed to have been left in the world expressly as a specimen of human misery. Blind, gouty, almost deaf, she lived alone in a garret; but a gayety, stronger than misfortune and illness, sustained her at eighty years of age, and made her still love life. Her neighbours never passed her door without going in to see her, and the antiquated tunes she hummed enlivened all the girls of the neighbourhood. She possessed a little annuity which suf-

ficed to maintain her; as long as day lasted, she knitted. She did not know what had happened since the death of Louis XIV.

It was to this worthy person that Julie had herself privately conducted. She donned for the occasion all her finery; feathers, laces, ribbons, diamonds, nothing was spared. She wanted to be fascinating; but the real secret of her beauty, in this case, was the whim that was carrying her away. She went up the steep, dark staircase which led to the good lady's chamber, and, after the most graceful bow, spoke somewhat as follows:

"You have, madame, a nephew, called Croisilles, who loves me and has asked for my hand; I love him, too, and wish to marry him; but my father, Monsieur Godeau, *fermier-général* of this town, refuses his consent, because your nephew is not rich. I would not, for the world, give occasion to scandal, nor cause trouble to anybody; I would therefore never think of disposing of myself without the consent of my family. I come to ask you a favour, which I beseech you to grant me. You must come yourself and propose this marriage to my father. I have, thank God, a little fortune which is quite at your disposal; you may take possession, whenever you see fit, of five hundred thousand francs at my notary's. You will say that this sum belongs to your nephew, which in fact it does. It is not a present that I am making him, it is a debt which I am paying, for I am the cause of the ruin of Croisilles, and it is but just that I should repair it. My father will not easily give in; you will be obliged to insist and you must have a little courage; I, for my part, will not fail. As nobody on earth excepting myself has any right to the sum of which I am speaking to you, nobody will ever know in what way this amount will have passed into your hands. You are not very rich yourself, I know, and you may fear that people will be astonished to see you thus endowing your nephew; but remember that my father does not know you, that you show yourself very little in town, and that, consequently, it will be easy for you to pretend that you have just arrived from some journey. This step will doubtless be some exertion to you; you will

have to leave your arm-chair and take a little trouble; but you will make two people happy, madame, and if you have ever known love, I hope you will not refuse me."

The old lady, during this discourse, had been in turn surprised, anxious, touched, and delighted. The last words persuaded her.

"Yes, my child," she repeated several times, "I know what it is,—I know what it is."

As she said this she made an effort to rise; her feeble limbs could barely support her; Julie quickly advanced and put out her hands to help her; by an almost involuntary movement they found themselves, in an instant, in each other's arms. A treaty was at once concluded; a warm kiss sealed it in advance, and the necessary and confidential consultation followed without further trouble.

All the explanations having been made, the good lady drew from her wardrobe a venerable gown of taffeta, which had been her wedding-dress. This antique piece of property was not less than fifty years old; but not a spot, not a grain of dust had disfigured it; Julie was in ecstasies over it. A coach was sent for, the handsomest in the town. The good lady prepared the speech she was going to make to Monsieur Godeau; Julie tried to teach her how she was to touch the heart of her father, and did not hesitate to confess that love of rank was his vulnerable point.

"If you could imagine," said she, "a means of flattering this weakness, you will have won our cause."

The good lady pondered deeply, finished her toilet without another word, clasped the hands of her future niece, and entered the carriage. She soon arrived at the Godeau mansion; there, she braced herself up so gallantly for her entrance that she seemed ten years younger. She majestically crossed the drawing-room where Julie's bouquet had fallen, and, when the door of the boudoir opened, said in a firm voice to the lackey who preceded her:

"Announce the dowager Baroness de Croisilles."

These words settled the happiness of the two lovers. Monsieur Godeau was bewildered by them. Although five hundred thousand francs seemed little to him, he consented to

everything, in order to make his daughter a baroness, as such she became;—who would dare contest her title? For my part, I think she had thoroughly earned it.

THE MUMMY'S FOOT

(*Le Pied de Momie*)

By THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

I HAD entered, in an idle mood, the shop of one of those curiosity venders who are called *marchands de bric-à-brac* in that Parisian *argot* which is so perfectly unintelligible elsewhere in France.

You have doubtless glanced occasionally through the windows of some of these shops, which have become so numerous now that it is fashionable to buy antiquated furniture, and that every petty stockbroker thinks he must have his *chambre au moyen âge*.

There is one thing there which clings alike to the shop of the dealer in old iron, the ware-room of the tapestry maker, the laboratory of the chemist, and the studio of the painter: in all those gloomy dens where a furtive daylight filters in through the window-shutters the most manifestly ancient thing is dust. The cobwebs are more authentic than the guimp laces, and the old pear-tree furniture on exhibition is actually younger than the mahogany which arrived but yesterday from America.

The warehouse of my bric-à-brac dealer was a veritable Capharnaum. All ages and all nations seemed to have made their rendezvous there. An Etruscan lamp of red clay stood upon a Boule cabinet, with ebony panels, brightly striped by lines of inlaid brass; a duchess of the court of Louis XV. nonchalantly extended her fawn-like feet under a mas-

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sive table of the time of Louis XIII., with heavy spiral supports of oak, and carven designs of chimeras and foliage intermingled.

Upon the denticulated shelves of several sideboards glittered immense Japanese dishes with red and blue designs relieved by gilded hatching, side by side with enamelled works by Bernard Palissy, representing serpents, frogs, and lizards in relief.

From disembowelled cabinets escaped cascades of silver-lustrous Chinese silks and waves of tinsel, which an oblique sunbeam shot through with luminous beads, while portraits of every era, in frames more or less tarnished, smiled through their yellow varnish.

The striped breastplate of a damascened suit of Milanese armour glittered in one corner; loves and nymphs of porcelain, Chinese grotesques, vases of *céladon* and crackle-ware, Saxon and old Sévres cups encumbered the shelves and nooks of the apartment.

The dealer followed me closely through the tortuous way contrived between the piles of furniture, warding off with his hand the hazardous sweep of my coat-skirts, watching my elbows with the uneasy attention of an antiquarian and a usurer.

It was a singular face, that of the merchant; an immense skull, polished like a knee, and surrounded by a thin aureole of white hair, which brought out the clear salmon tint of his complexion all the more strikingly, lent him a false aspect of patriarchial *bonhomie*, counteracted, however, by the scintillation of two little yellow eyes which trembled in their orbits like two louis-d'or upon quick silver. The curve of his nose presented an aquiline silhouette, which suggested the Oriental or Jewish type. His hands—thin, slender, full of nerves which projected like strings upon the finger-board of a violin, and armed with claws like those on the terminations of bats' wings—shook with senile trembling; but those convulsively agitated hands became firmer than steel pincers or lobsters' claws when they lifted any precious article—an onyx cup, a Venetian glass, or a dish of Bohemian crystal. This strange old man had an aspect so

thoroughly rabbinical and cabalistic that he would have been burnt on the mere testimony of his face three centuries ago.

"Will you not buy something from me to-day, sir? Here is a Malay krees with a blade undulating like flame. Look at those grooves contrived for the blood to run along, those teeth set backward so as to tear out the entrails in withdrawing the weapon. It is a fine character of ferocious arm, and will look well in your collection. This two-handed sword is very beautiful. It is the work of Joseph de la Hera; and this *coliche-marde*, with its fenestrated guard—what a superb specimen of handicraft!"

"No; I have quite enough weapons and instruments of carnage. I want a small figure, something which will suit me as a paper-weight, for I cannot endure those trumpery bronzes which the stationers sell, and which may be found on everybody's desk."

The old gnome foraged among his ancient wares, and finally arranged before me some antique bronzes, so-called at least; fragments of malachite, little Hindoo or Chinese idols, a kind of poussah-toys in jade-stone, representing the incarnations of Brahma or Vishnoo, and wonderfully appropriate to the very undivine office of holding papers and letters in place.

I was hesitating between a porcelain dragon, all constellated with warts, its mouth formidable with bristling tusks and ranges of teeth, and an abominable little Mexican fetich, representing the god Vitziliputzili *au naturel*, when I caught sight of a charming foot, which I at first took for a fragment of some antique Venus.

It had those beautiful ruddy and tawny tints that lend to Florentine bronze that warm, living look so much preferable to the gray-green aspect of common bronzes, which might easily be mistaken for statues in a state of putrefaction. Satiny gleams played over its rounded forms, doubtless polished by the amorous kisses of twenty centuries, for it seemed a Corinthian bronze, a work of the best era of art, perhaps moulded by Lysippus himself.

"That foot will be my choice," I said to the merchant, who

regarded me with an ironical and saturnine air, and held out the object desired that I might examine it more fully.

I was surprised at its lightness. It was not a foot of metal, but in sooth a foot of flesh, an embalmed foot, a mummy's foot. On examining it still more closely the very grain of the skin, and the almost imperceptible lines impressed upon it by the texture of the bandages, became perceptible. The toes were slender and delicate, and terminated by perfectly formed nails, pure and transparent as agates. The great toe, slightly separated from the rest, afforded a happy contrast, in the antique style, to the position of the other toes, and lent it an aërial lightness—the grace of a bird's foot. The sole, scarcely streaked by a few almost imperceptible cross lines, afforded evidence that it had never touched the bare ground, and had only come in contact with the finest matting of Nile rushes and the softest carpets of panther skin.

"Ha, ha, you want the foot of the Princess Hermonthis!" exclaimed the merchant, with a strange giggle, fixing his owlish eyes upon me. "Ha, ha, ha! For a paper-weight! An original idea!—artistic idea! Old Pharaoh would certainly have been surprised had some one told him that the foot of his adored daughter would be used for a paper-weight after he had had a mountain of granite hollowed out as a receptacle for the triple coffin, painted and gilded, covered with hieroglyphics and beautiful paintings of the Judgment of Souls," continued the queer little merchant, half audibly, as though talking to himself.

"How much will you charge me for this mummy fragment?"

"Ah, the highest price I can get, for it is a superb piece. If I had the match of it you could not have it for less than five hundred francs. The daughter of a Pharaoh! Nothing is more rare."

"Assuredly that is not a common article, but still, how much do you want? In the first place let me warn you that all my wealth consists of just five louis. I can buy anything that costs five louis, but nothing dearer. You might search

my vest pockets and most secret drawers without even finding one poor five-franc piece more."

"Five louis for the foot of the Princess Hermonthis! That is very little, very little indeed. 'Tis an authentic foot," muttered the merchant, shaking his head, and imparting a peculiar rotary motion to his eyes. "Well, take it, and I will give you the bandages into the bargain," he added, wrapping the foot in an ancient damask rag. "Very fine! Real damask—Indian damask which has never been redyed. It is strong, and yet it is soft," he mumbled, stroking the frayed tissue with his fingers, through the trade-acquired habit which moved him to praise even an object of such little value that he himself deemed it only worth the giving away.

He poured the gold coins into a sort of mediæval alms-purse hanging at his belt, repeating:

"The foot of the Princess Hermonthis to be used for a paper-weight!"

Then turning his phosphorescent eyes upon me, he exclaimed in a voice strident as the crying of a cat which has swallowed a fish-bone:

"Old Pharaoh will not be well pleased. He loved his daughter, the dear man!"

"You speak as if you were a contemporary of his. You are old enough, goodness knows! but you do not date back to the Pyramids of Egypt," I answered, laughingly, from the threshold.

I went home, delighted with my acquisition.

With the idea of putting it to profitable use as soon as possible, I placed the foot of the divine Princess Hermonthis upon a heap of papers scribbled over with verses, in themselves an undecipherable mosaic work of erasures; articles freshly begun; letters forgotten, and posted in the table drawer instead of the letter-box, an error to which absent-minded people are peculiarly liable. The effect was charming, *bizarre*, and romantic.

Well satisfied with this embellishment, I went out with the gravity and pride becoming one who feels that he has the ineffable advantage over all the passers-by whom he

elbows, of possessing a piece of the Princess Hermonthis, daughter of Pharaoh.

I looked upon all who did not possess, like myself, a paper-weight so authentically Egyptian as very ridiculous people, and it seemed to me that the proper occupation of every sensible man should consist in the mere fact of having a mummy's foot upon his desk.

Happily I met some friends, whose presence distracted me in my infatuation with this new acquisition. I went to dinner with them, for I could not very well have dined with myself.

When I came back that evening, with my brain slightly confused by a few glasses of wine, a vague whiff of Oriental perfume delicately titillated my olfactory nerves. The heat of the room had warmed the natron, bitumen, and myrrh in which the *paraschistes*, who cut open the bodies of the dead, had bathed the corpse of the princess. It was a perfume at once sweet and penetrating, a perfume that four thousand years had not been able to dissipate.

The Dream of Egypt was Eternity. Her odours have the solidity of granite and endure as long.

I soon drank deeply from the black cup of sleep. For a few hours all remained opaque to me. Oblivion and nothingness inundated me with their sombre waves.

Yet light gradually dawned upon the darkness of my mind. Dreams commenced to touch me softly in their silent flight.

The eyes of my soul were opened, and I beheld my chamber as it actually was. I might have believed myself awake but for a vague consciousness which assured me that I slept, and that something fantastic was about to take place.

The odour of the myrrh had augmented in intensity, and I felt a slight headache, which I very naturally attributed to several glasses of champagne that we had drunk to the unknown gods and our future fortunes.

I peered through my room with a feeling of expectation which I saw nothing to justify. Every article of furniture was in its proper place. The lamp, softly shaded by its globe of ground crystal, burned upon its bracket; the water-colour

sketches shone under their Bohemian glass; the curtains hung down languidly; everything wore an aspect of tranquil slumber.

After a few moments, however, all this calm interior appeared to become disturbed. The woodwork cracked stealthily, the ash-covered log suddenly emitted a jet of blue flame, and the disks of the pateras seemed like great metallic eyes, watching, like myself, for the things which were about to happen.

My eyes accidentally fell upon the desk where I had placed the foot of the Princess Hermonthis.

Instead of remaining quiet, as behooved a foot which had been embalmed for four thousand years, it commenced to act in a nervous manner, contracted itself, and leaped over the papers like a startled frog. One would have imagined that it had suddenly been brought into contact with a galvanic battery. I could distinctly hear the dry sound made by its little heel, hard as the hoof of a gazelle.

I became rather discontented with my acquisition, inasmuch as I wished my paper-weights to be of a sedentary disposition, and thought it very unnatural that feet should walk about without legs, and I commenced to experience a feeling closely akin to fear.

Suddenly I saw the folds of my bed-curtain stir, and heard a bumping sound, like that caused by some person hopping on one foot across the floor. I must confess I became alternately hot and cold, that I felt a strange wind chill my back, and that my suddenly rising hair caused my night-cap to execute a leap of several yards.

The bed-curtains opened and I beheld the strangest figure imaginable before me.

It was a young girl of a very deep coffee-brown complexion, like the bayadere Amani, and possessing the purest Egyptian type of perfect beauty. Her eyes were almond-shaped and oblique, with eyebrows so black that they seemed blue; her nose was exquisitely chiselled, almost Greek in its delicacy of outline; and she might indeed have been taken for a Corinthian statue of bronze but for the prominence of her cheek-bones and the slightly African ful-

ness of her lips, which compelled one to recognize her as belonging beyond all doubt to the hieroglyphic race which dwelt upon the banks of the Nile.

Her arms, slender and spindle-shaped like those of very young girls, were encircled by a peculiar kind of metal bands and bracelets of glass beads; her hair was all twisted into little cords, and she wore upon her bosom a little idol-figure of green paste, bearing a whip with seven lashes, which proved it to be an image of Isis; her brow was adorned with a shining plate of gold, and a few traces of paint relieved the coppery tint of her cheeks.

As for her costume, it was very odd indeed.

Fancy a *pagne*, or skirt, all formed of little strips of material bedizened with red and black hieroglyphics, stiffened with bitumen, and apparently belonging to a freshly unbandaged mummy.

In one of those sudden flights of thought so common in dreams I heard the hoarse falsetto of the bric-à-brac dealer, repeating like a monotonous refrain the phrase he had uttered in his shop with so enigmatical an intonation:

"Old Pharaoh will not be well pleased. He loved his daughter, the dear man!"

One strange circumstance, which was not at all calculated to restore my equanimity, was that the apparition had but one foot; the other was broken off at the ankle!

She approached the table where the foot was starting and fidgeting about more than ever, and there supported herself upon the edge of the desk. I saw her eyes fill with pearly gleaming tears.

Although she had not as yet spoken, I fully comprehended the thoughts which agitated her. She looked at her foot—for it was indeed her own—with an exquisitely graceful expression of coquettish sadness, but the foot leaped and ran hither and thither, as though impelled on steel springs.

Twice or thrice she extended her hand to seize it, but could not succeed.

Then commenced between the Princess Hermonthis and her foot—which appeared to be endowed with a special life of its own—a very fantastic dialogue in a most ancient Cop-

tic tongue, such as might have been spoken thirty centuries ago in the syrnixes of the land of Ser. Luckily I understood Coptic perfectly well that night.

The Princess Hermonthis cried, in a voice sweet and vibrant as the tones of a crystal bell:

"Well, my dear little foot, you always flee from me, yet I always took good care of you. I bathed you with perfumed water in a bowl of alabaster; I smoothed your heel with pumice-stone mixed with palm oil; your nails were cut with golden scissors and polished with a hippopotamus tooth; I was careful to select *tatbebs* for you, painted and embroidered and turned up at the toes, which were the envy of all the young girls in Egypt. You wore on your great toe rings bearing the device of the sacred Scarabæus, and you supported one of the lightest bodies that a lazy foot could sustain."

The foot replied in a pouting and chagrined tone:

"You know well that I do not belong to myself any longer. I have been bought and paid for. The old merchant knew what he was about. He bore you a grudge for having refused to espouse him. This is an ill turn which he has done you. The Arab who violated your royal coffin in the subterranean pits of the necropolis of Thebes was sent thither by him. He desired to prevent you from being present at the reunion of the shadowy nations in the cities below. Have you five pieces of gold for my ransom?"

"Alas, no! My jewels, my rings, my purses of gold and silver were all stolen from me," answered the Princess Hermonthis, with a sob.

"Princess," I then exclaimed, "I never retained anybody's foot unjustly. Even though you have not got the five louis which it cost me, I present it to you gladly. I should feel unutterably wretched to think that I were the cause of so amiable a person as the Princess Hermonthis being lame."

I delivered this discourse in a royally gallant, troubadour tone which must have astonished the beautiful Egyptian girl.

She turned a look of deepest gratitude upon me, and her eyes shone with bluish gleams of light.

She took her foot, which surrendered itself willingly this time, like a woman about to put on her little shoe, and adjusted it to her leg with much skill.

This operation over, she took a few steps about the room, as though to assure herself that she was really no longer lame.

"Ah, how pleased my father will be! He who was so unhappy because of my mutilation, and who from the moment of my birth set a whole nation at work to hollow me out a tomb so deep that he might preserve me intact until that last day, when souls must be weighed in the balance of Amenthi! Come with me to my father. He will receive you kindly, for you have given me back my foot."

I thought this proposition natural enough. I arrayed myself in a dressing-gown of large-flowered pattern, which lent me a very Pharaonic aspect, hurriedly put on a pair of Turkish slippers, and informed the Princess Hermonthis that I was ready to follow her.

Before starting, Hermonthis took from her neck the little idol of green paste, and laid it on the scattered sheets of paper which covered the table.

"It is only fair," she observed, smilingly, "that I should replace your paper-weight."

She gave me her hand, which felt soft and cold, like the skin of a serpent, and we departed.

We passed for some time with the velocity of an arrow through a fluid and grayish expanse, in which half-formed silhouettes flitted swiftly by us, to right and left.

For an instant we saw only sky and sea.

A few moments later obelisks commenced to tower in the distance; pylons and vast flights of steps guarded by sphinxes became clearly outlined against the horizon.

We had reached our destination.

The princess conducted me to a mountain of rose-coloured granite, in the face of which appeared an opening so narrow and low that it would have been difficult to distinguish it from the fissures in the rock, had not its location been marked by two stelæ wrought with sculptures.

Hermonthis kindled a torch and led the way before me.

We traversed corridors hewn through the living rock. Their walls, covered with hieroglyphics and paintings of allegorical processions, might well have occupied thousands of arms for thousands of years in their formation. These corridors of interminable length opened into square chambers, in the midst of which pits had been contrived, through which we descended by cramp-irons or spiral stairways. These pits again conducted us into other chambers, opening into other corridors, likewise decorated with painted sparrow-hawks, serpents coiled in circles, the symbols of the *tau* and *pedun*—prodigious works of art which no living eye can ever examine—interminable legends of granite which only the dead have time to read through all eternity.

At last we found ourselves in a hall so vast, so enormous, so immeasurable, that the eye could not reach its limits. Files of monstrous columns stretched far out of sight on every side, between which twinkled livid stars of yellowish flame; points of light which revealed further depths incalculable in the darkness beyond.

The Princess Hermonthis still held my hand, and graciously saluted the mummies of her acquaintance.

My eyes became accustomed to the dim twilight, and objects became discernible.

I beheld the kings of the subterranean races seated upon thrones—grand old men, though dry, withered, wrinkled like parchment, and blackened with naphtha and bitumen—all wearing *pshents* of gold, and breast-plates and gorgets glittering with precious stones, their eyes immovably fixed like the eyes of sphinxes, and their long beards whitened by the snow of centuries. Behind them stood their peoples, in the stiff and constrained posture enjoined by Egyptian art, all eternally preserving the attitude prescribed by the hieratic code. Behind these nations, the cats, ibixes, and crocodiles contemporary with them—rendered monstrous of aspect by their swathing bands—mewed, flapped their wings, or extended their jaws in a saurian giggle.

All the Pharaohs were there—Cheops, Chephrenes, Psammetichus, Sesostris, Amenotaph—all the dark rulers of the pyramids and sphinxes. On yet higher thrones sat Chronos

and Xixouthros, who was contemporary with the deluge, and Tubal Cain, who reigned before it.

The beard of King Xixouthros had grown seven times around the granite table, upon which he leaned, lost in deep reverie, and buried in dreams.

Farther back, through a dusty cloud, I beheld dimly the seventy-two preadamite kings, with their seventy-two peoples, forever passed away.

After permitting me to gaze upon this bewildering spectacle a few moments, the Princess Hermonthis presented me to her father Pharaoh, who favoured me with a most gracious nod.

"I have found my foot again! I have found my foot!" cried the princess, clapping her little hands together with every sign of frantic joy. "It was this gentleman who restored it to me."

The races of Kemi, the races of Nahasi—all the black, bronzed, and copper-coloured nations repeated in chorus:

"The Princess Hermonthis has found her foot again!"

Even Xixouthros himself was visibly affected.

He raised his heavy eyelids, stroked his mustache with his fingers, and turned upon me a glance weighty with centuries.

"By Oms, the dog of Hell, and Tmei, daughter of the Sun and of Truth, this is a brave and worthy lad!" exclaimed Pharaoh, pointing to me with his sceptre, which was terminated with a lotus-flower.

"What recompense do you desire?"

Filled with that daring inspired by dreams in which nothing seems impossible, I asked him for the hand of the Princess Hermonthis. The hand seemed to me a very proper antithetic recompense for the foot.

Pharaoh opened wide his great eyes of glass in astonishment at my witty request.

"What country do you come from, and what is your age?"

"I am a Frenchman, and I am twenty-seven years old, venerable Pharaoh."

"Twenty-seven years old, and he wishes to espouse the

Princess Hermonthis who is thirty centuries old!" cried out at once all the Thrones and all the Circles of Nations.

Only Hermonthis herself did not seem to think my request unreasonable.

"If you were even only two thousand years old," replied the ancient king, "I would willingly give you the princess, but the disproportion is too great; and, besides, we must give our daughters husbands who will last well. You do not know how to preserve yourselves any longer. Even those who died only fifteen centuries ago are already no more than a handful of dust. Behold, my flesh is solid as basalt, my bones are bars of steel!

"I will be present on the last day of the world with the same body and the same features which I had during my lifetime. My daughter Hermonthis will last longer than a statue of bronze.

"Then the last particles of your dust will have been scattered abroad by the winds, and even Isis herself, who was able to find the atoms of Osiris, would scarce be able to recompense your being.

"See how vigorous I yet remain, and how mighty is my grasp," he added, shaking my hand in the English fashion with a strength that buried my rings in the flesh of my fingers.

He squeezed me so hard that I awoke, and found my friend Alfred shaking me by the arm to make me get up.

"Oh, you everlasting sleeper! Must I have you carried out into the middle of the street, and fireworks exploded in your ears? It is afternoon. Don't you recollect your promise to take me with you to see M. Aguado's Spanish pictures?"

"God! I forgot all, all about it," I answered, dressing myself hurriedly. "We will go there at once. I have the permit lying there on my desk."

I started to find it, but fancy my astonishment when I beheld, instead of the mummy's foot I had purchased the evening before, the little green paste idol left in its place by the Princess Hermonthis!

THE MARQUISE

(*La Marquise*)

By GEORGE SAND

THE Marquise de R—— never said brilliant things, although it is the fashion in French fiction to make every old woman sparkle with wit. Her ignorance was extreme in all matters which contact with the world had not taught her, and she had none of that nicety of expression, that exquisite penetration, that marvelous tact, which belong, it is said, to women who have seen all the different phases of life and society; she was blunt, heedless, and sometimes very cynical. She put to flight every idea I have formed concerning the noble ladies of the olden times, yet she was a genuine Marquise and had seen the Court of Louis XV. But as she was an exceptional character, do not seek in her history for a study of the manners of any epoch.

I found much pleasure in the society of the lady. She seemed to me remarkable for nothing much except her prodigious memory for the events of her youth and the masculine lucidity with which she expressed her reminiscences. For the rest, she was, like all aged persons, forgetful of recent events and indifferent to everything in which she had not any present personal concern.

Her beauty had not been of that piquant order, which, though lacking in splendour and regularity, still gives pleasure in itself; she was not one of those women taught to be witty, in order to make as favorable an impression as those who are so by nature. The Marquise undoubtedly

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had had the misfortune to be beautiful. I have seen her portrait, for, like all old women, she was vain enough to hang it up for inspection in her apartments. She was represented in the character of a huntress nymph, with a low satin waist painted to imitate tiger-skin, sleeves of antique lace, bow of sandal-wood, and a crescent of pearl lighting up her hair. It was an admirable painting, and, above all, an admirable woman—tall, slender, dark, with black eyes, austere and noble features, unsmiling, deep red lips, and hands which, it was said, had thrown the Princess de Lamballe into despair. Without lace, satin, or powder, she might indeed have seemed one of those beautiful, proud nymphs fabled to appear to mortals in the depth of the forest or upon the solitary mountain-sides, only to drive them mad with passion and regret.

Yet the Marquise had made few acquaintances; according to her own account she had been thought dull and frivolous. The roués of that time cared less for the charms of beauty than for the allurements of coquetry; women infinitely less admired than she had robbed her of all her adorers, and, strange enough, she had seemed indifferent to her fate. The little she told me of her life made me believe that her heart had had no youth, and that a cold selfishness had paralyzed all its faculties. Still, her old age was adorned by several sincere friends, and she gave alms without ostentation.

One evening I found her even more communicative than usual; there was much of sadness in her voice. "My child," she said, "the Vicomte de Larrieux has just died of the gout. It is a great sorrow to me, for I have been his friend these sixty years."

"What was his age?" I asked.

"Eighty-four. I am eighty, but not so infirm as he was, and I can hope to live longer. *N'importe!* Several of my friends have gone this year, and although I tell myself that I am younger and stronger than any of them, I can not help being frightened when I see my contemporaries dropping off around me."

"And these," said I, "are the only regrets you feel for

poor Larrieux, a man who worshipped you for sixty years, who never ceased to complain of your cruelty, yet never revolted from his allegiance? He was a model lover: there are no more such men."

"My dear child," answered the Marquise, "I see that you think me cold and heartless. Perhaps you are right; judge for yourself. I will tell you my whole history, and, whatever opinion you may have of me, I shall, at least, not die without having made myself known to some one.

"When I was sixteen I left St. Cyr, where I had been educated, to marry the Marquis de R——. He was fifty, but I dared not complain, for every one congratulated me on this splendid match, and all my portionless companions envied my lot.

"I was never very bright, and at that time I was positively stupid; the education of the cloister had completely benumbed my faculties. I left the convent with a romantic idea of life and of the world, stupidly considered a merit in young girls, but which often results in the misery of their whole lives. As a natural consequence, the experience brought me by my brief married life was lodged in so narrow a mind that it was of no use to me. I learned, not to understand life, but to doubt myself.

"I was a widow before I was seventeen, and as soon as I was out of mourning I was surrounded by suitors. I was then in all the splendour of my beauty, and it was generally admitted that there was neither face nor figure that could compare with mine; but my husband, an old, worn-out, dissipated man, who had never shown me anything but irony and disdain, and had married me only to secure an office promised with my hand, had left me such an aversion to marriage that I could never be brought to contract new ties. In my ignorance of life I fancied that all men resembled him, and that in a second husband I should find M. de R——'s hard heart, his pitiless irony, and that insulting coldness which had so deeply humiliated me.

"This terrible entrance into life had dispelled for me all the illusions of youth. My heart, which perhaps was not entirely cold, withdrew into itself and grew suspicious. I

was foolish enough to tell my real feelings to several women of my acquaintance. They did not fail to tell what they had learned, and without considering the doubts and anguish of my heart, boldly declared that I despised all men. There is nothing men will resent more readily than this; my lovers soon learned to despise me, and continued their flatteries only in the hope of finding an opportunity to hold me up to ridicule. I saw mockery and treachery written upon every forehead, and my misanthropy increased every day. About this time there came to Paris from the Provinces a man who had neither talent, strength, nor fascination, but who possessed a frankness and uprightness of feeling very rare among the people with whom I lived. This was the Vicomte de Larrieux. He was soon acknowledged to be my most favoured lover.

"He, poor fellow, loved me sincerely in his soul. His soul! Had he a soul? He was one of those hard, prosaic men who have not even the elegance of vice or the glitter of falsehood. He was struck only by my beauty; he took no pains to discover my heart. This was not disdain on his part, it was incapacity. Had he found in me the power of loving, he would not have known how to respond to it. I do not think there ever lived a man more wedded to material things than poor Larrieux. He ate with delight, and fell asleep in all the armchairs; the remainder of the time he took snuff. He was always occupied in satisfying some appetite. I do not think he had one idea a day. And yet, my dear friend, will you believe it? I never had the energy to get rid of him; for sixty years he was my torment. Constantly offended by my repulses, yet constantly drawn to me by the very obstacles I placed in the way of his passion, he had for me the most faithful, the most undying, the most wearisome love that ever man felt for woman."

"I am surprised," said I, "that in the course of your life you never met a man capable of understanding you, and worthy of converting you to real love. Must we conclude that the men of to-day are superior to those of other times?"

"That would be a great piece of vanity on your part," she answered, smiling. "I have little reason to speak well

of the men of my own time; yet I doubt, too, whether you have made much progress; but I will not moralize. The cause of my misfortune was entirely within myself. I had no tact, no judgment. A woman as proud as I was should have possessed a superior character, and should have been able to distinguish at a glance many of the insipid, false, insignificant men who surrounded me. I was too ignorant, too narrow-minded for this. As I lived on I acquired more judgment and have learned that several of the objects of my hatred deserved far other feelings."

"And while you were young," I rejoined, "were you never tempted to make a second trial? Was this deep-rooted aversion never shaken off? It is strange."

The Marquise was silent, then hastily laying her gold snuff-box on the table—"I have begun my confession," said she, "and I will acknowledge everything. Listen. Once, and only once, I have loved, with a love as passionate and indomitable as it was imaginative and ideal. For you see, my child, you young men think you understand women, but you know nothing about them. If many old women of eighty were occasionally to tell you the history of their loves, you would perhaps find that the feminine soul contains sources of good and evil of which you have no idea. And now, guess what was the rank of the man for whom I entirely lost my head—I, a Marquise, and prouder and haughtier than any other."

"The King of France, or the Dauphin, Louis XIV."

"Oh, if you go on in that manner, it will be three hours before you come to my lover. I prefer to tell you at once—he was an actor."

"A king, notwithstanding, I imagine."

"The noblest, the most elegant that ever trod the boards. You are not amazed?"

"Not much. I have heard that such ill-sorted passions were not rare, even when the prejudices of caste in France were more powerful than they are to-day."

"Those ill-sorted passions were not tolerated by the world, I can assure you. The first time I saw him I expressed my admiration to the Comtesse de Ferriers, who happened

to be beside me, and she answered: 'Do not speak so warmly to any one but me. You would be cruelly taunted were you suspected of forgetting that in the eyes of a woman of rank an actor can never be a man.'

"Madame Ferriers's words remained in my mind, I know not why. At the time this contemptuous tone of hers seemed to me absurd, and this fear of committing myself a piece of malicious hypocrisy.

"His name was Lelio; he was by birth an Italian, but spoke French admirably. He may have been thirty-five, although on the stage he often seemed less than twenty. He played Corneille; after this he played Racine, and in both he was admirable."

"I am surprised," said I, interrupting the Marquise, "that his name does not appear in the annals of dramatic talent."

"He was never famous," she answered, "and was appreciated neither by the court nor the town. I have heard that he was outrageously hissed when he first appeared. Afterward he was valued for his feeling, his fire, and his efforts at correct elocution. He was tolerated and sometimes applauded, but, on the whole, he was always considered an actor without taste.

"In those days tragedy was played 'properly'; it was necessary to die with taste, to fall gracefully, and to have an air of good breeding, even in the case of a blow. Dramatic art was modeled upon the usage of good society, and the diction and gestures of the actors were in harmony with the hoops and hair powder, which even then disfigured 'Phèdre.'* I have never appreciated the defects of this school of art. I bravely endured it twice in the week, for it was the fashion to like it; but I listened with so cold and constrained an air that it was generally said I was insensible to the charms of fine poetry.

"One evening, after a rather long absence from Paris, I went to the Comédie Française to see 'Le Cid.'† Lelio had been admitted to this theatre during my stay in the coun-

* "Phèdre," by Pecine.

† "Le Cid," by Corneille.

try, and I saw him for the first time. He played Rodrigue. I was deeply moved by the very first tone of his voice. It was penetrating rather than sonorous, but vibrating and strongly accentuated. His voice was much criticized. That of the Cid was supposed to be deep and powerful, just as all the heroes of antiquity were supposed to be tall and strong. A king who was but five feet six inches could not wear the diadem; it would have been contrary to the decrees of tastes. Lelio was small and slender. His beauty lay not in the features, but in the nobleness of his forehead, the irresistible grace of his attitude, the careless ease of his movements, the proud but melancholy expression of his face. The word charm should have been invented for him; it belonged to all his words, to all his glances, to all his motions. It was indeed a charm which he threw around me. This man, who stepped, spoke, moved without system or affectation, who sobbed with his heart as much as with his voice, who forgot himself to become identified with his passion; this man in whom the body seemed wasted and shattered by the soul, and a single one of whose glances contained all the life I failed to find in real life, exercised over me a really magnetic power. I alone could follow and understand him, and he was for five years my kind, my life, my love. To me he was much more than a man. His was an intellectual power which formed my soul at its will. Soon I was unable to conceal the impression he made on me. I gave up my box at the Comédie Française in order not to betray myself. I pretended I had become pious, and in the evening I went to pray in the churches; instead of that I dressed myself as a working woman and mingled with the common people that I might listen to him unconstrained. At last I bribed one of the employees of the theatre to let me occupy a little corner where no one could see me and which I reached by a side corridor. As an additional precaution I dressed myself as a schoolboy. When the hour for the theatre sounded in the large clock in my drawing-room I was seized with violent palpitations. While my carriage was getting ready I tried to control myself; and if Larrieux happened to be with me I was rude

to him, and threatened to send him away. I must have had great dissimulation and great tact to have hidden all this for five years from Larrieux, the most jealous of men, and from all the malicious people about me.

"I must tell you that instead of struggling against this passion I yielded to it with eagerness, with delight. It was so pure! Why should I have blushed for it? It gave me new life; it initiated me into all the feelings I had wished to experience; it almost made me a woman. I was proud to feel myself thrill and tremble. The first time my dormant heart beat aloud was to me a triumph. I learned to pout, to love, to be faithful and capricious. It was remarked I grew handsomer every day, that my dark eyes softened, that my smile was more expressive, that what I said was truer and had more meaning than could have been expected.

"I have just told you that when I heard the clock strike I trembled with joy and impatience. Even now I seem to feel the delicious oppression which used to overwhelm me at the sound of that clock. Since then, through the vicissitudes of fortune, I have come to find myself very happy in the possession of a few small rooms in the Marais. Well, of all my magnificent house, my aristocratic *faubourg*, and my past splendour I regret only that which could have recalled to me those days of love and dreams. I have saved from the general ruin a few pieces of furniture which I look upon with as much emotion as if the hour for the theatre were about to strike now, and my horses were pawing at the door. Oh! my child, never love as I loved; it is a storm which death alone can quell.

"Then I learned to take pleasure in being young, wealthy, and beautiful. Seated in my coach, my feet buried in furs, I could see myself reflected in the mirror in front of me. The dress of that time, which has since been so laughed at, was of extraordinary richness and splendour. When arranged with taste and modified in its exaggeration, it endowed a beautiful woman with dignity, with a softness, the grace of which the portraits of that time could give you no idea. A woman, clothed in its panoply of feathers, of

silks, and flowers, was obliged to move slowly. I have seen very fair woman in white robes with long trains of watered silk, their hair powdered and dressed with white plumes, who might without exaggeration have been compared to swans. Despite all Rousseau has said, those enormous folds of satin, that profusion of muslin which enveloped a slender little body as down envelops a dove, made us resemble birds, rather than wasps. Long wings of lace fell from our arms, and our ribbons, purses, and jewels were variegated with the most brilliant colours. Balancing ourselves in our little high-heeled shoes, we seemed to fear to touch the earth and walked with the disdainful circumspection of a little bird on the edge of a brook.

"At the time of which I am speaking blonde powder began to be worn and gave the hair a light and soft colour. This method of modifying the crude shades of the hair gave softness to the face, and an extraordinary brilliance to the eyes. The forehead was completely uncovered, its outline melted insensibly into the pale shades of the hair. It thus appeared higher and prouder, and gave all women a majestic air. It was the fashion, too, to dress the hair low, with large curls thrown back and falling on the neck. This was very becoming to me, and I was celebrated for the taste and magnificence of my dress. I sometimes wore red velvet with grebe-skin, sometimes white satin edged with tiger-skin, sometimes lilac damask shot with silver, with white feathers and pearls in my hair. Thus attired I would pay a few visits until the hour for the second piece at the theatre, for Lelio never came on in the first. I created a sensation wherever I appeared, and, when I again found myself in my carriage, I contemplated with much pleasure the reflected image of the woman who loved Lelio, and might have been loved by him. Until then, the only pleasure I had found in being beautiful lay in the jealousy I excited. But from the moment that I loved I began to enjoy my beauty for its own sake.) It was all I had to offer Lelio as a compensation for the triumphs which were denied him in Paris, and I loved to think of the pride and joy this poor actor, so misjudged, so laughed at, would feel

were he told that the Marquise de R—— had dedicated her heart to him. These the dreams, however, were as brief as they were beautiful. As soon as my thoughts assumed some consistency, as soon as they took the form of any plan whatever, I had the fortitude to suppress them, and all the pride of rank reasserted its empire over my soul. You seem surprised at this. I will explain it by and by.

“About eight o'clock my carriage stopped at the little Church of the Carmelites near the Luxembourg, and I sent it away, for I was supposed to be attending the religious lectures which were given there at that hour. But I only crossed the church and the garden and came out on the other street. I went to the garret of the young needlewoman named Florence, who was devoted to me. I locked myself up in her room, and joyfully laid aside all my adornments to don the black square-cut coat, the sword and wig of a young college professor. Tall, with my dark complexion and inoffensive glances, I really had the awkward hypocritical look of a little priestling who had stolen in to see the play. I took a hackney coach, and hastened to hide myself in my little box at the theatre. Then my joy, my terror, my trembling ceased. A profound calm came upon me and I remained until the raising of the curtain as if absorbed in expectation of some great solemnity.

“As the vulture in his hypnotic circling surrounds the partridge and holds him panting and motionless, so did the soul of Lelio, that great soul of a poet and tragedian, envelop all my faculties, and plunge me into a torpor of admiration. I listened, my hands clasped upon my knees and my chin upon the front of the box, and my forehead bathed in perspiration; I hardly breathed; the crude light of the lamps tortured my eyes, which, tired and burning, were fastened on his every gesture, his every step. His feigned motions, his simulated misfortune, impressed me as if they were real. I could hardly distinguish between truth and illusion. To me, Lelio was indeed Rodrigue, Bajazet, Hippolyte. I hated his enemies. I trembled at his dangers; his sorrows drew from me floods of tears,

and when he died I was compelled to stifle my emotions in my handkerchief.

"Between the acts I sat down at the back of my box; I was as one dead until the meagre tone of the orchestra warned me that the curtain was about to rise again. Then I sprang up, full of strength and ardour, the power to feel, to weep. How much freshness, poetry, and youth there was in that man's talent! That whole generation must have been of ice not to have fallen at his feet.

"And yet, although he offended every conventional idea, although he could not adapt his taste to that silly public, although he scandalized the women by the carelessness of his dress and deportment, and displeased the men by his contempt for their foolish actions, there were moments when, by an irresistible fascination, by the power of his eye and his voice, he held the whole of this ungrateful public as if in the hollow of his hand, and compelled it to applaud and tremble. This happened but seldom, for the entire spirit of the age can not be suddenly changed; but when it did happen, the applause was frantic. It seemed as if the Parisians, subjugated by his genius, wished to atone for all their injustice. As for me, I believed that this man had at most a supernatural power, and that those who most bitterly despised him were compelled to swell his triumph in spite of themselves. In truth, at such times the *Comédie Française* seemed smitten with madness, and the spectators, on leaving the theatre, were amazed to remember that they had applauded Lelio. As for me, I seized the opportunity to give full play to my emotion; I shouted, I wept, I passionately called his name. Happily for me, my weak voice was drowned in the storm which raged about me.

"At other times he was hissed when he seemed to me to be sublime, and then I left the theatre, my heart full of rage. Those nights were the most dangerous for me. I was violently tempted to seek him out, to weep with him, to curse the age in which we lived, and to console him by offering him my enthusiasm and love.

"One evening as I left the theatre by the side passage which led to my box, a small, slender man passed in front of

me, and turned into the street. One of the stage-carpenters took off his hat and said: 'Good evening, Monsieur Lelio.' Eager to obtain a nearer view of this extraordinary man, I ran after him, crossed the street and, forgetting the danger to which I exposed myself, followed him into a café. Fortunately, it was not one in which I was likely to meet any one of my own rank.

"When, by the light of the smoky lamp, I looked at Lelio, I thought I had been mistaken and had followed another man. He was at least thirty-five, sallow, withered, and worn out. He was badly dressed, he looked vulgar, spoke in a hoarse, broken voice, shook hands with the meanest wretches, drank brandy, and swore horribly. It was not until I had heard his name repeated several times that I felt sure that this was the divinity of the theatre, interpreter of the great Corneille. I could recognize none of those charms which had so fascinated me, not even his glance, so bright, so ardent, and so sad. His eyes were dull, dead, almost stupid; his strongly accentuated pronunciation seemed ignoble when he called to the waiter, or talked of gambling and taverns. He walked badly, he looked vulgar, and the paint was only half wiped from his cheeks. It was no longer Hippolyte—it was Lelio. The temple was empty; the oracle was dumb; the divinity had become a man, not even a man—an actor.

"He went out, and I sat stupefied without even presence of mind enough to drink the hot spiced wine I had called for. When I remembered where I was, and perceived the insulting glances which were heaped upon me, I became frightened. It was the first time I had ever found myself in such an equivocal position, and in such immediate contact with people of that class.

"I rose and tried to escape, but forgot to pay my reckoning. The waiter ran after me; I was terribly ashamed; I was obliged to return, enter into explanations at the desk, and endure all the mocking and suspicious looks which were turned upon me. When I left I thought I was followed. In vain I looked for a hackney-coach; there were none remaining in front of the theatre. I constantly heard

heavy steps echoing my own. Trembling, I turned my head, and recognized a tall, ill-looking fellow whom I had noticed in one corner of the café, and who had very much the air of a spy or something worse. He spoke to me; I do not know what he said; I was too much frightened to hear, but I had still presence of mind enough to rid myself of him. I struck him in the face with my cane, and, leaving him stunned at my audacity, I shot away swift as an arrow, and did not stop till I reached Florence's little garret. When I awoke the next morning in my own bed with its wadded curtains and coronal of pink feathers, I almost thought I had dreamed, and felt greatly mortified when I recollected the disillusion of the previous night. I thought myself thoroughly cured of my love, and I tried to rejoice at it, but in vain. I was filled with a mortal regret, the weariness of life again entered my heart, the world had not a pleasure which could charm me.

"Evening came, but brought no more beneficial emotions. Society seemed to me stupid. I went to church and listened to the evening lecture with a determination of becoming pious; I caught cold, and came home quite ill. I remained in bed several days. The Comtesse de Ferrières came to see me, assured me that I had no fever, that lying still made me ill, that I must amuse myself, go out, go to the theatre. She compelled me to go with her to see 'Cinna.'* 'You no longer go to the theatre,' said she to me; 'your health is undermined by your piety, and the dulness of your life. You have not seen Lelio for some time; he has improved, and he is now sometimes applauded. I think he may some day become very tolerable.'

"I do not know why I allowed myself to be persuaded. However, as I was completely disenchanted with Lelio, I thought I no longer ran any risk in braving his fascinations in public. I dressed myself with excessive brilliance, and, in a court proscenium box, fronted a danger in which I no longer believed.

"But the danger was never more imminent. Lelio was

* "Cinna," a tragedy by Corneille.

sublime, and I had never been more in love with him. My recent adventure seemed but a dream. I could not believe that Lelio was other than he seemed upon the stage. In spite of myself, I yielded to the terrible agitations into which he had the power of throwing me. My face was bathed in tears, and I was compelled to cover it with my handkerchief. In the disorder of my mind I wiped off my rouge and my patches, and the Comtesse de Ferrières advised me to retire to the back of my box, for my emotion was creating a sensation in the house. I fortunately had had the skill to make every one believe it was the playing of Mdlle. Hippolyte Clairon which affected me so deeply. She was, in my own opinion, a very cold and formal actress, too superior perhaps for her profession, as it was then understood; but her manner of saying 'Tout beau,' in 'Cinna,' had given her a great reputation. It must be said, however, that when she played with Lelio she outdid herself. Although she took pains to proclaim her share in the fashionable contempt for his method of acting, she assuredly felt the influence of his genius.

"That evening Lelio noticed me, either on account of my dress or my emotion; for I saw him, when he was not acting, bend over one of the spectators, who, at that epoch, sat upon the stage, and inquire my name. I guessed his question by the way both looked at me. My heart beat almost to suffocation, and I noticed during the play that Lelio's eyes turned several times toward me. What would I not have given to hear what the Chevalier de Bretillac, whom he had questioned, had said to him about me! Lelio's face did not indicate the nature of the information he had received, for he was obliged to retain the expression suited to his part. I knew this Bretillac very slightly, and I could not imagine whether he would speak well or ill of me.

"That night I understood for the first time the nature of the passion which enchaind me to Lelio. It was a passion purely intellectual, purely ideal. (It was not he I loved, but those heroes of ancient times whose sincerity, whose fidelity, whose tenderness he knew how to portray)

with him and by him I was carried back to an epoch of forgotten virtues. I was bright enough to think that in those days I should not have been misjudged and hated, and that I should not have been reduced to loving a phantom of the footlights. Lelio was to me but the shadow of the Cid, the representative of that antique chivalric love now ridiculed in France. My Lelio was a fictitious being who had no existence outside the theatre. The illusions of the stage, the glare of the footlights, were a part of the being whom I loved. Without them he was nothing to me, and faded like a story before the brightness of day. I had no desire to see him off the boards; and should have been in despair had I met him. It would have been like contemplating the ashes of a great man.

"One evening as I was going to the Carmelite church with the intention of leaving it by the passage door, I perceived that I was followed, and became convinced that henceforth it would be almost impossible to conceal the object of my nocturnal expeditions. I decided to go publicly to the theatre. Lelio saw me and watched me; my beauty had struck him, my sensibility flattered him. His attention sometimes wandered so much as to displease the public. Soon I could no longer doubt. He was madly in love with me.

"My box had pleased the Princess de Vaudemont. I gave it up to her, and took for myself a smaller one, less in view of the house and better situated. I was almost upon the stage, I did not lose one of Lelio's glances; and he could look at me without its being seen by the public. But I no longer needed to catch his eye in order to understand all his feelings. The sound of his voice, his sighs, the expression which he gave to certain verses, certain words, told me that he was speaking to me. I was the happiest and proudest of women, for then it was the hero, not the actor, who loved me.

"I have since heard that Lelio often followed me in my walks and drives; so little did I desire to see him outside of the theatre that I never perceived it. Of the eighty years

I have passed in this world, those five are the only ones in which I really lived.

"One day I read in the 'Mercure de France' the name of a new actor engaged at the Comédie Française to replace Lelio, who was about to leave France.

"This announcement was a mortal blow to me. I could not conceive how I should exist when deprived of these emotions, this life of passion and storm. This event gave an immense development to my love, and was well-nigh my ruin.

"I no longer struggled with myself; I no longer sought to stifle all thoughts contrary to the dignity of my rank. I regretted that he was not what he appeared on the stage; I wished him as young and handsome as he seemed each night before the footlights, that I might sacrifice to him all my pride, all my prejudices.

"While I was in this state of irresolution, I received a letter in an unknown hand. It is the only love letter I have ever kept. Though Larrieux has written me innumerable protestations, and I have received a thousand perfumed declarations from a hundred others, it is the only real love letter that was ever sent me."

The Marquise rose, opened with a steady hand an inlaid casket, and took from it a crumpled, worn-out letter, which I read with difficulty.

"MADAME—I am certain you will feel nothing but contempt for this letter, you will not even deem it worthy of your anger. But, to a man falling into an abyss, what matters one more stone at the bottom? You will think me mad, and you will be right. You will perhaps pity me, for you will not doubt my sincerity. However humble your piety may have made you, you will understand the extent of my despair; you must already know *how much evil and how much good your eyes can do*. . . .

"You must know this already, madame; it is impossible that the violent emotions I have portrayed upon the stage, my cries of wrath and despair, have not twenty times revealed to you my passion. You can not have lighted all

these flames without being conscious of what you did. Perhaps you played with me as a tiger with his prey; perhaps the spectacle of my folly and my tortures was your pastime. But no; to think so were to presume too much. No, madame, I do not believe it; you never thought of me. You felt the verses of the great Corneille, you identified these with the noble passions of tragedy; that was all. And I, madman that I was, I dared to think that my voice alone sometimes awoke your sympathies, that my heart echoed in yours, that between you and me there was something more than between me and the public. Oh, my madness was arrant, but it was sweet! Leave me my illusions, madame; what are they to you? Do you fear that I should boast of them? By what right should I do so, and who would believe me? I should only make myself a laughing-stock of sensible people. Leave me this conviction; it has given me more joy than the severity of the public has caused me sorrow. Let me bless you, let me thank you upon my knees, for the sensibility which I have discovered in your soul, and which no one else has ever shown me; for the tears which I have seen you shed for my fictitious sorrows, and which have often raised my inspiration almost to delirium; for the timid glances which sought, at least it seemed so, to console me for the coldness of my audience. Oh, why were you born to pomp and splendour! Why am I an obscure and nameless artist! Why have I not riches and the favour of the public, that I might exchange them for a name, for one of those titles which I have hitherto disdained, and which, perhaps, would permit me to aspire as high as you are placed! Once I deemed the distinctions conferred upon talent superior to all others. To what purpose, thought I, is a man a Chevalier or a Marquis but to be the sillier, the vainer, and the more insolent? I hated the pride of men of rank, and thought that I should be sufficiently avenged for their disdain if my genius raised me above them. Dreams and delusions all! My strength has not equalled my mad ambition. I have remained obscure; I have done worse—I have touched success, and allowed it to escape me. I

thought myself great, and I was cast down to the dust; I imagined that I was almost sublime, and I was condemned to be ridiculous. Fate took me—me and my audacious dreams—and crushed me as if I had been a reed. I am a most wretched man! But I committed my greatest folly when I cast my eyes beyond that row of lights which marked between me and the rest of society an invisible line of separation. It is to me a circle of Popilius. I, an actor, I dared to raise my eyes and fasten them upon a beautiful woman—upon a woman, young, lovely, and of high rank; for you are all this, madame, and I know it. The world accuses you of coldness and of exaggerated piety. I alone understand you. Your first smile, your first tear, sufficiently disproved the absurd fable which Chevalier de Bretillac repeated against you.

“But then what a destiny is yours! What fatality weighs upon you as upon me, that in the midst of society so brilliant, which calls itself so enlightened, you should have found only the heart of a poor actor to do you justice. Nothing will deprive me of the sad and consoling thought that, had we been born in the same rank, you would have been mine in spite of my rivals, in spite of my inferiority. You would have been compelled to acknowledge that there is in me something greater than their wealth, and their titles—the power of loving you. LELIO.”

“This letter,” continued the Marquise, “was of a character very unusual at the time as was written, and seemed to me, notwithstanding some passages of theatrical declamation at the beginning, so powerful, so true, so full of only bold passion, that I was overwhelmed by it. The pride which still struggled within me faded away. I would have given all the remaining days I had to live one hour of such love.

“I answered in these words, as nearly as I can remember:

“‘I do not accuse you, Lelio; I accuse destiny. I do not pity you alone; I pity myself also. Neither pride nor prudence shall make me deny you the consolation of believing that I have felt a preference for you. Keep it, for it is the

only one I can offer you. I can never consent to see you.'

"Next day I received a note which I hastily read and threw into the fire, to prevent Larrieux from seeing it, for he came suddenly upon me while I was reading it. It read thus:

"*MADAME*—I must see you or I must die. Once—once only, but for a single hour, if such is your will. Why should you fear an interview since you trust my honour and my prudence. Madame, I know who you are; I am well aware of your piety and of the austerity of your life. I am not fool enough to hope for anything but a word of compassion, but it must fall from your own lips. My heart must receive it and bear it away, or my heart must break.

LELIO.'

"I believed implicitly in the humility, in the sincerity of Lelio. Besides, I had ample reason to trust my own strength. I resolved to see him. I had completely forgotten his faded features, his low-bred manners, his vulgar aspect; I recollected only the fascination of his genius, his letters, and his love. I answered:

"I will see you. Find some secure place, but hope for nothing but for what you have asked. Should you seek to abuse my trust, you would be a villain, and I should not fear you.'

"Answer:

"Your trust would save you from the basest of villains. You will see, Madame, that Lelio is not unworthy of it. Duke — has often been good enough to offer me the use of his house in the Rue de Valois. Deign to go thither after the play.'

"Some explanations and directions as to the locality of the house followed. I received this note at four o'clock. The whole negotiation had occupied but a day. I had spent it in wandering through the house like one distracted; I was in a fever. This rapid succession of events bore me along as in a dream.

"When I had made the final decision, when it was im-

possible to draw back, I sank down upon my ottoman, breathless and dizzy.

"I was really ill. A surgeon was sent for; I was bled. I told my servants not to mention my indisposition to any one; I dreaded the intrusion of officious advisers, and was determined not to be prevented from going out that night.

"I threw myself upon my bed to await the appointed hour, and gave orders that no visitors should be admitted. The blood-letting had relieved and weakened me; I sank into a great depression of spirits. All my illusions vanished with the excitement which had accompanied my fever. Reason and memory returned; I remembered my disenchantment in the coffee-house, and Lelio's wretched appearance there; I prepared to blush for my folly, and to fall from the height of my deceitful visions to a bare and despicable reality. I no longer understood how it had been possible for me to consent to exchange my heroic and romantic tenderness for the revulsion of feeling which awaited me, and the sense of shame which would henceforth poison all my recollections. I bitterly regretted what I had done; I wept my illusions, my love, and that future of pure and secret joys which I was about to forfeit. Above all, I mourned for Lelio, whom in seeing I should forever lose, in whose love I had found five years of happiness, and for whom in a few hours I should feel nothing but indifference.

"In the paroxysm of my grief I violently wrung my arms; the vein reopened, and I had barely time to ring for my maid, who found me in a swoon in my bed. A deep and heavy sleep, against which I struggled in vain, seized me. I neither dreamed nor suffered; I was as one dead for several hours. When I again opened my eyes my room was almost dark, my house silent; my waiting-woman was asleep in a chair at the foot of my bed. I remained for some time in such a state of numbness and weakness that I recollected nothing. Suddenly my memory returned, and I asked myself whether the hour and the day of rendezvous were passed, whether I had slept an hour or a century; whether I had killed Lelio by breaking my word. Was

there yet time? I tried to rise, but my strength failed me. I struggled for some moments as if in a nightmare. At last I summoned all the forces of my will. I sprang to the floor, opened the curtains, and saw the moon shining upon the trees of my garden. I ran to the clock; the hands marked ten. I seized my maid and waked her: 'Quinette, what day of the week is it?' She sprang from her chair, screaming, and tried to escape from me, for she thought me delirious; I reassured her and learned that I had only slept three hours. I thanked God. I asked for a hackney-coach. Quinette looked at me in amazement. At last she became convinced that I had the full use of my senses, transmitted my order, and began to dress me.

"I asked for my simplest dress; I put no ornaments in my hair, I refused to wear my rouge. I wished above all things for Lelio's esteem and respect, for they were far more precious to me than his love. Nevertheless, I was pleased when Quinette, who was much surprised at this new caprice, said, examining me from head to foot: 'Truly, madame, I know not how you manage it. You are dressed in a plain white robe, without either train or pannier; you are ill and as pale as death; you have not even put on a patch; yet I never saw you so beautiful as to-night. I pity the men who will look upon you!' 'Do you think me so very austere, my poor Quinette?' 'Alas, madame, every day I pray Heaven to make me like you; but up to this time——' 'Come, simpleton, give me my mantle and muff.'

"At midnight I was in the house of the Rue de Valois. I was carefully veiled, a sort of valet de chambre received me; he was the only human being to be seen in this mysterious dwelling. He led me through the windings of a dark garden to a pavilion buried in silence and shadow. Depositing his green silk lantern in the vestibule, he opened the door of a large dusky room, showed me by a respectful gesture and with a most impassive face a ray of light proceeding from the other extremity, and said, in a tone so low that it seemed as if he feared to awaken the sleeping echoes: 'Your ladyship is alone, no one else has yet come. Your ladyship will find in the summer parlor a bell which

I will answer if you need anything.' He disappeared as if by enchantment, shutting the door upon me.

"I was terribly frightened; I thought I had fallen into some trap. I called him back. He instantly reappeared, and his air of stupid solemnity reassured me. I asked him what time it was, although I knew perfectly well, for I had sounded my watch twenty times in the carriage. 'It is midnight,' answered he, without raising his eyes. I now resolutely entered the summer parlor, and I realized how unfounded were my fears when I saw that the doors which opened upon the garden were only of painted silk. Nothing could be more charming than this boudoir; it was fitted up as a concert-room. The walls were of stucco as white as snow, and the mirrors were framed in unpolished silver. Musical instruments of unusually rich material were scattered about, upon seats of white velvet, trimmed with pearls. The light came from above through leaves of alabaster, which formed a dome. This soft, even light might have been mistaken for that of the moon. A single statue of white marble stood in the middle of the room; it was an antique and represented Isis veiled, with her finger upon her lips. The mirrors which reflected us, both pale and draped in white, produced such an illusion upon me that I was obliged to distinguish my finger from hers.

"Suddenly the silence was interrupted; the door was opened and closed, and light footsteps sounded upon the floor. I sank into a chair more dead than alive, for I was about to see Lelio shorn of the illusions of the stage. I closed my eyes, and inwardly bade them farewell before I reopened them.

"But how much was I surprised! Lelio was beautiful as an angel. He had not taken off his stage dress, and it was the most elegant I had ever seen him wear. His Spanish doublet was of white satin, his shoulder and garter knots of cherry ribbons, and a short cloak of the same colour was thrown over his shoulder. He wore an immense ruff of English lace; his hair was short and unpowdered, partially covered by a cap with white feathers and a diamond rose. In this costume he had just played Don

Juan in 'Festin de Pierre.' Never had I seen him so beautiful, so young, so poetical, as at that moment. Velasquez would have worshipped such a model.

"He knelt before me. I could not help stretching out my hand to him, he seemed so submissive, so fearful of displeasing me. A man sufficiently in love to tremble before a woman was rare in those times, and this one was thirty-five and an actor.

"It seemed to me then, it seems to me still, that he was in the first bloom of youth. In his white dress he looked like a young page; his forehead had all the purity, his heart all the ardour of a first love. He took my hands and covered them with kisses. My senses seemed to desert me; I caressed his burning forehead, his stiff, black hair, and the brown neck which disappeared in the soft whiteness of his collar. He wept like a woman; I was overwhelmed with surprise.

"I wept delicious tears. I compelled him to raise his head and look at me. How splendid, how tender were his eyes! How much fascination his warm, true soul communicated to the very defects of his face, and the scars left upon it by time and toil! When I saw the premature wrinkles upon his beautiful forehead, when I saw the pallor of his lips, the languor of his smile, my heart was melted. I felt that I must needs weep for his griefs, his disappointments, the labours of his life. I identified myself with him in all his sorrows, even that of his long, hopeless love for me, and I had but one wish—to compensate him for the ills he had suffered.

"My dear Lelio, my great Rodrigue, my beautiful Don Juan! He spoke to me, he told me how from a dissipated actor I had made him a man full of life and ardour; how I had raised him in his own eyes, and restored to him the illusions of his youth; he spoke of his respect, his veneration for me, of his contempt for the species of love which was then in fashion. Never did a man with more penetrating eloquence speak to the heart of a woman; never did Racine make love utter itself with such conviction of its own truth, such poetry, such strength. Everything ele-

vated and profound, everything sweet and fiery which passion can inspire, lay in his words, his face, his eyes, his caresses. Alas! did he deceive himself! Was he playing a part,"

"I certainly do not think so," I cried, looking at the Marquise. She seemed to grow young as she spoke; and, like the fairy Urgela, to cast off her hundred years. I know not who has said that a woman's heart has no wrinkles.

"Listen to the end," said she. "I threw my arms around his neck; I shivered as I touched the satin of his coat, as I breathed the perfume of his hair. My emotion was too violent and I fainted.

"He recalled me to myself by his prompt assistance. I found him still kneeling at my feet. 'Pity me, kill me,' cried he. He was paler and far more ill than I.

"Listen, Lelio," said I. "Here we separate forever, but let us carry from this place a whole future of blissful thoughts and adored memories. I swear, Lelio, to love you till my death. I swear it without fear, for I feel that the snows of age will not have the power to extinguish this ardent flame." Lelio knelt before me; he did not implore me, he did not reproach me; he said that he had not hoped for so much happiness as I had given him, and that he had no right to ask for more. Nevertheless, as he bade me farewell, his despair, the emotion which trembled in his face, terrified me. I asked him if he would not find happiness in thinking of me, if the ecstasy of our meeting would not lend its charm to all the days of his life, if his past and future sorrows would not be softened each time he recalled it. He roused himself to promise, to swear all I asked. He again fell at my feet and passionately kissed my dress. I made a sign and he left me. The carriage I had sent for came.

"The automatic servant of the house knocked three times outside to warn me. Lelio despairingly threw himself in front of the door; he looked like a spectre. I gently repulsed him and he yielded. I crossed the threshold, and as he attempted to follow me, I showed him a chair in the middle of the room, underneath the statue of Isis. He sat down in it. A passionate smile wandered over his lips, his eyes

sent out one more flash of gratitude and love. He was still beautiful, still young, still a grandee of Spain. After a few steps, when I was about to lose him forever, I turned back and looked at him once more. Despair had crushed him. He was old, altered, frightful. His body seemed paralyzed. His stiffened lips attempted an unmeaning smile. His eyes were glassy and dim; he was now only Lelio, the shadow of a lover and a prince."

The Marquise paused; then, while her aspect changed like that of a ruin which totters and sinks, she added: "Since then I have not heard him mentioned."

The Marquise made a second and a longer pause; then, with the terrible fortitude which comes with length of years, which springs from the persistent love of life or the near hope of death, she said with a smile: "Well, do you not now believe in the ideality of the eighteenth century?"

Z. MARCAS

(*Z. Marcas*)

By HONORÉ DE BALZAC

I NEVER saw anybody, not even among the most remarkable men of the day, whose appearance was so striking as this man's; the study of his countenance at first gave me a feeling of great melancholy, and at last produced an almost painful impression.

There was a certain harmony between the man and his name. The Z. preceding Marcas, which was seen on the addresses of his letters, and which he never omitted from his signature, as the last letter of the alphabet, suggested some mysterious fatality.

MARCAS! say this two-syllabled name again and again; do you not feel as if it had some sinister meaning? Does it not seem to you that its owner must be doomed to martyrdom? Though foreign, savage, the name has a right to be handed down to posterity; it is well constructed, easily pronounced, and has the brevity that befits a famous name. Is it not pleasant as well as odd? But does it not sound unfinished?

I will not take it upon myself to assert that names have no influence on the destiny of men. There is a certain secret and inexplicable concord or a visible discord between the events of a man's life and his name which is truly surprising; often some remote but very real correlation is revealed. Our globe is round; everything is linked to everything else. Some day perhaps we shall revert to the occult sciences.

Translated by Ellen Marriage.

Do you not discern in that letter Z an adverse influence? Does it not prefigure the wayward and fantastic progress of a storm-tossed life? What wind blew on that letter, which, whatever language we find it in, begins scarcely fifty words? Marcas' name was Zephirin; Saint Zephirin is highly venerated in Brittany, and Barcas was a Breton.

Study the name once more: Z. Marcas! The man's whole life lies in this fantastic juxtaposition of seven letters; seven! the most significant of all the cabalistic numbers. And he died at five-and-thirty, so his life extended over seven lustres.

Marcas! Does it not hint of some precious object that is broken with a fall, with or without a crash?

I had finished studying the law in Paris in 1836. I lived at that time in the Rue Corneille in a house where none but students came to lodge, one of those large houses where there is a winding staircase quite at the back, lighted below from the street, higher up by borrowed lights, and at the top by a skylight. There were forty furnished rooms—furnished as students' rooms are! What does youth demand more than was here supplied? A bed, a few chairs, a chest of drawers, a looking-glass, and a table. As soon as the sky is blue the student opens his window.

But in this street there are no fair neighbours to flirt with. In front is the Odéon, long since closed, presenting a wall that is beginning to go black, its tiny gallery windows and its vast expanse of slate roof. I was not rich enough to have a good room; I was not even rich enough to have a room to myself. Juste and I shared a double-bedded room on the fifth floor.

On our side of the landing there were but two rooms—ours and a smaller one, occupied by Z. Marcas, our neighbour. For six months Juste and I remained in perfect ignorance of the fact. The old woman who managed the house had indeed told us that the room was inhabited, but she had added that we should not be disturbed, that the occupant was exceedingly quiet. In fact those six months, we never met our fellow-lodger, and we never heard a sound

in his room, in spite of the thinness of the partition that divided us—one of those walls of lath and plaster which are common in Paris houses.

Our room, a little over seven feet high, was hung with a vile cheap paper sprigged with blue. The floor was painted, and knew nothing of the polish given by the *frotteur's* brush. By our beds there was only a scrap of thin carpet. The chimney opened immediately to the roof, and smoked so abominably that we were obliged to provide a stove at our own expense. Our beds were mere painted wooden cribs like those in schools; on the chimney shelf there were but two brass candlesticks, with or without tallow candles in them, and our two pipes with some tobacco in a pouch or strewn abroad, also the little piles of cigar-ash left there by our visitors or ourselves.

A pair of calico curtains hung from the brass window rods, and on each side of the window was a small bookcase in cherry-wood, such as every one knows who has stared into the shop windows of the Quartier Latin, and in which we kept the few books necessary for our studies.

The ink in the inkstand was always in the state of lava congealed in the crater of a volcano. May not any inkstand nowadays become a Vesuvius? The pens, all twisted, served to clean the stems of our pipes; and, in opposition to all the laws of credit, paper was even scarcer than coin.

How can young men be expected to stay at home in such furnished lodgings? The students studied in the cafés, the theatre, the Luxembourg gardens, in *grisettes'* rooms, even in the law schools—anywhere rather than in their horrible rooms—horrible for purposes of study, delightful as soon as they are used for gossiping and smoking in. Put a cloth on the table, and the impromptu dinner sent in from the best eating-house in the neighbourhood—places for four—two of them in petticoats—show a lithograph of this "Interior" to the veriest bigot, and she will be bound to smile.

We thought only of amusing ourselves. The reason for our dissipation lay in the most serious facts of the politics of the time. Juste and I could not see any room for us in the two professions our parents wished us to take up.

There are a hundred doctors, a hundred lawyers, for one that is wanted. The crowd is choking these two paths which are supposed to lead to fortune, but which are merely two arenas; men kill each other there, fighting, not indeed with swords or firearms, but with intrigue and calumny, with tremendous toil, campaigns in the sphere of the intellect as murderous as those in Italy were to the soldiers of the Republic. In these days, when everything is an intellectual-competition, a man must be able to sit forty-eight hours on end in his chair before a table, as a General could remain for two days on horseback and in his saddle.

The throng of aspirants has necessitated a division of the Faculty of Medicine into categories. There is the physician who writes and the physician who practises, the political physician, and the physician militant—four different ways of being a physician, four classes already filled up. As to the fifth class, that of physicians who sell remedies, there is such a competition that they fight each other with disgusting advertisements on the walls of Paris.

In all the law courts there are almost as many lawyers as there are cases. The pleader is thrown back on journalism, on politics, on literature. In fact, the State, besieged for the smallest appointments under the law, has ended by requiring that the applicants should have some little fortune. The pear-shaped head of the grocer's son is selected in preference to the square skull of a man of talent who has not a sou. Work as he will, with all his energy, a young man, starting from zero, may at the end of ten years find himself below the point he set out from. In these days, talent must have the good luck which secures success to the most incapable; nay, more, if it scorns the base compromises which insure advancement to crawling mediocrity, it will never get on.

If we thoroughly knew our time, we also knew ourselves, and we preferred the indolence of dreamers to aimless stir, easy-going pleasure to the useless toil which would have exhausted our courage and worn out the edge of our intelligence. We had analyzed social life while smoking, laughing, and loafing. But, though elaborated by such means

as these, our reflections were none the less judicious and profound.

While we were fully conscious of the slavery to which youth is condemned, we were amazed at the brutal indifference of the authorities to everything connected with intellect, thought, and poetry. How often have Juste and I exchanged glances when reading the papers as we studied political events, or the debates in the Chamber, and discussed the proceedings of a Court whose wilful ignorance could find no parallel but in the platitude of the courtiers, the mediocrity of the men forming the hedge round the newly-restored throne, all alike devoid of talent or breadth of view, of distinction or learning, of influence or dignity!

Could there be a higher tribute to the court of Charles X. than the present Court, if Court it may be called? What a hatred of the country may be seen in the naturalization of vulgar foreigners, devoid of talent, who are enthroned in the Chamber of Peers! What a perversion of justice! What an insult to the distinguished youth, the ambitions native to the soil of France! We looked upon these things as upon a spectacle, and groaned over them, without taking upon ourselves to act.

Juste, whom no one ever sought, and who never sought any one, was, at five-and-twenty, a great politician, a man with a wonderful aptitude for apprehending the correlation between remote history and the facts of the present and of the future. In 1831, he told me exactly what would and did happen—the murders, the conspiracies, the ascendancy of the Jews, the difficulty of doing anything in France, the scarcity of talent in the higher circles, and the abundance of intellect in the lowest ranks, where the finest courage is smothered under cigar ashes.

What was to become of him? His parents wished him to be a doctor. But if he were a doctor, must he not wait twenty years for a practice? You know what he did? No? Well, he is a doctor; but he left France, he is in Asia. At this moment he is perhaps sinking under fatigue in a desert, or dying of the lashes of a barbarous horde—or perhaps he is some Indian prince's prime minister.

Action is my vocation. Leaving a civil college at the age of twenty, the only way for me to enter the army was by enlisting as a common soldier; so, weary of the dismal outlook that lay before a lawyer, I acquired the knowledge needed for a sailor. I imitate Juste, and keep out of France, where men waste, in the struggle to make way, the energy needed for the noblest works. Follow my example, friends; I am going where a man steers his destiny as he pleases.

These great resolutions were formed in the little room in the lodging-house in the Rue Corneille, in spite of our haunting the Bal Musard, flirting with girls of the town, and leading a careless and apparently reckless life. Our plans and arguments long floated in the air.

Marcas, our neighbour, was in some degree the guide who led us to the margin of the precipice or the torrent, who made us sound it, and showed us beforehand what our fate would be if we let ourselves fall into it. It was he who put us on our guard against the time-bargains a man makes with poverty under the sanction of hope, by accepting precarious situations whence he fights the battle, carried along by the devious tide of Paris—that great harlot who takes you up or leaves you stranded, smiles or turns her back on you with equal readiness, wears out the strongest will in vexatious waiting, and makes misfortune wait on chance.

At our first meeting, Marcas, as it were, dazzled us. On our return from the schools, a little before the dinner-hour, we were accustomed to go up to our room and remain there a while, either waiting for the other, to learn whether there were any change in our plans for the evening. One day, at four o'clock, Juste met Marcas on the stairs, and I saw him in the street. It was in the month of November, and Marcas had no cloak; he wore shoes with heavy soles, corduroy trousers, and a blue double-breasted coat buttoned to the throat, which gave a military air to his broad chest, all the more so because he wore a black stock. The costume was not in itself extraordinary, but it agreed well with the man's mien and countenance.

My first impression on seeing him was neither surprise,

nor distress, nor interest, nor pity, but curiosity mingled with all these feelings. He walked slowly, with a step that betrayed deep melancholy, his head forward with a stoop, but not bent like that of a conscience-stricken man. That head, large and powerful, which might contain the treasures necessary for a man of the highest ambition, looked as if it were loaded with thought; it was weighted with grief of mind, but there was no touch of remorse in his expression. As to his face, it may be summed up in a word. A common superstition has it that every human countenance resembles some animal. The animal for Marcas was the lion. His hair was like a mane, his nose was short and flat; broad and dented at the tip like a lion's; his brow, like a lion's, was strongly marked with a deep median furrow, dividing two powerful bosses. His high, hairy cheek-bones, all the more prominent because his cheeks were so thin, his enormous mouth and hollow jaws, were accentuated by lines of haughty significance, and marked by a complexion full of tawny shadows. This almost terrible countenance seemed illuminated by two lamps—two eyes, black indeed, but infinitely sweet, calm and deep, full of thought. If I may say so, those eyes had a humiliated expression.

Marcas was afraid of looking directly at others, not for himself, but for those on whom his fascinating gaze might rest; he had a power, and he shunned using it; he would spare those he met, and he feared notice. This was not from modesty, but from resignation—not Christian resignation, which implies charity, but resignation founded on reason, which had demonstrated the immediate inutility of his gifts, the impossibility of entering and living in the sphere for which he was fitted. Those eyes could at times flash lightnings. From those lips a voice of thunder must surely proceed; it was a mouth like Mirabeau's.

"I have seen such a grand fellow in the street," said I to Juste on coming in.

"It must be our neighbour," replied Juste, who described, in fact, the man I had just met. "A man who lives like a wood-louse would be sure to look like that," he added.

"What dejection and what dignity!"

"One is the consequence of the other."

"What ruined hopes! What schemes and failures!"

"Seven leagues of ruins! Obelisks—palaces—towers!—
The ruins of Palmyra in the desert!" said Juste, laughing.

So we called him the Ruins of Palmyra.

As we went out to dine at the wretched eating-house in the Rue de la Harpe to which he subscribed, we asked the name of Number 37, and then heard the weird name Z. Marcas. Like boys, as we were, we repeated it more than a hundred times with all sorts of comments, absurd or melancholy, and the name lent itself to the jest. Juste would fire off the Z like a rocket rising, *z-z-z-z-zed*; and after pronouncing the first syllable of the name with great importance, depicted a fall by the dull brevity of the second.

"Now, how and where does the man live?"

From this query, to the innocent espionage of curiosity there was no pause but that required for the carrying out our plan. Instead of loitering about the streets, we both came in, each armed with a novel. We read with our ears open. And in the perfect silence of our attic rooms, we heard the even, dull sound of a sleeping man breathing.

"He is asleep," said I to Juste, noticing this fact.

"At seven o'clock!" replied the Doctor.

This was the name by which I called Juste, and he called me the Keeper of the Seals.

"A man must be wretched indeed to sleep as much as our neighbour!" cried I, jumping on to the chest of drawers with a knife in my hand, to which a corkscrew was attached.

I made a round hole at the top of the partition, about as big as a five-sou piece. I had forgotten that there would be no light in the room, and on putting my eye to the hole, I saw only darkness. At about one in the morning, when we had finished our books and were about to undress, we heard a noise in our neighbour's room. He got up, struck a match, and lighted his dip. I got on to the drawers again, and I then saw Marcas seated at his table and copying law-papers.

His room was about half the size of ours; the bed stood in a recess by the door, for the passage ended there, and its breadth was added to his garret; but the ground on which

the house was built was evidently irregular, for the party-wall formed an obtuse angle, and the room was not square. There was no fireplace, only a small earthenware stove, white blotched with green, of which the pipe went up through the roof. The window, in the skew side of the room, had shabby red curtains. The furniture consisted of an arm-chair, a table, a chair, and a wretched bed-table. A cupboard in the wall held his clothes. The wall-paper was horrible; evidently only a servant had ever lodged there before Marcas.

"What is to be seen?" asked the Doctor as I got down.

"Look for yourself," said I.

At nine next morning, Marcas was in bed. He had breakfasted off a saveloy; we saw on a plate, with some crumbs of bread, the remains of that too familiar delicacy. He was asleep; he did not wake till eleven. He then set to work again on the copy he had begun the night before, which was lying on the table.

On going downstairs we asked the price of that room, and were told fifteen francs a month.

In the course of a few days, we were fully informed as to the mode of life of Z. Marcas. He did copying, at so much a sheet no doubt, for a law-writer who lived in the courtyard of the Sainte-Chapelle. He worked half the night; after sleeping from six till ten, he began again and wrote till three. Then he went out to take the copy home before dinner, which he ate at Mizeraï's in the Rue Michel-le-Comte, at a cost of nine sous, and came in to bed at six o'clock. It became known to us that Marcas did not utter fifteen sentences in a month; he never talked to anybody, nor said a word to himself in his dreadful garret.

"The Ruins of Palmyra are terribly silent!" said Juste.

This taciturnity in a man whose appearance was so imposing was strangely significant. Sometimes when we met him, we exchanged glances full of meaning on both sides, but they never led to any advances. Insensibly this man became the object of our secret admiration, though we knew no reason for it. Did it lie in his secretly simple habits, his monastic regularity, his hermit-like frugarity, his idiotically

mechanical labour, allowing his mind to remain neuter or to work on its own lines, seeming to us to hint at an expectation of some stroke of good luck, or at some foregone conclusion as to his life?

After wandering for a long time among the Ruins of Palmyra, we forgot them—we were young! Then came the Carnival, the Paris Carnival, which, henceforth, will eclipse the old Carnival of Venice, unless some ill-advised Prefect of Police is antagonistic.

Gambling ought to be allowed during the Carnival; but the stupid moralists who have had gambling suppressed are inert financiers, and this indispensable evil will be re-established among us when it is proved that France leaves millions at the German tables.

This splendid Carnival brought us to utter penury, as it does every student. We got rid of every object of luxury; we sold our second coats, our second boots, our second waist-coats—everything of which we had a duplicate, except our friend. We ate bread and cold sausages; we looked where we walked; we had set to work in earnest. We owed two months' rent, and were sure of having a bill from the porter for sixty or eighty items each, and amounting to forty or fifty francs. We made no noise, and did not laugh as we crossed the little hall at the bottom of the stairs; we commonly took it at a flying leap from the lowest step into the street. On the day when we first found ourselves bereft of tobacco for our pipes, it struck us that for some days we had been eating bread without any kind of butter.

Great was our distress.

"No tobacco!" said the Doctor.

"No cloak!" said the Keeper of the Seals.

"Ah, you rascals, you would dress as the postillon de Longjumeau, you would appear as Débardeurs, sup in the morning, and breakfast at night at Véry's—sometimes even at the *Rocher de Cancale*.—Dry bread for you, my boys! Why," said I, in a big bass voice, "you deserve to sleep under the bed, you are not worthy to lie in it——"

"Yes, yes; but, Keeper of Seals, there is no more tobacco!" said Juste.

"It is high time to write home, to our aunts, our mothers, and our sisters, to tell them we have no underlinen left, that the wear and tear of Paris would ruin garments of wire. Then we will solve an elegant chemical problem by transmuting linen into silver."

"But we must live till we get the answer."

"Well, I will go and bring out a loan among such of our friends as may still have some capital to invest."

"And how much will you find?"

"Say ten francs!" replied I with pride.

It was midnight. Marcas had heard everything. He knocked at our door.

"Messieurs," said he, "here is some tobacco; you can repay me on the first opportunity."

We were struck, not by the offer, which we accepted, but by the rich, deep, full voice in which it was made; a tone only comparable to the lowest string of Paganini's violin. Marcas vanished without waiting for our thanks.

Juste and I looked at each other without a word. To be rescued by a man evidently poorer than ourselves! Juste sat down to write to every member of his family, and I went off to effect a loan. I brought in twenty francs lent me by a fellow-provincial. In that evil but happy day gambling was still tolerated, and in its lodes, as hard as the rocky ore of Brazil, young men, by risking a small sum, had a chance of winning a few gold pieces. My friend, too, had some Turkish tobacco brought home from Constantinople by a sailor, and he gave me quite as much as we had taken from Z. Marcas. I conveyed the splendid cargo into port, and we went in triumph to repay our neighbour with a tawny wig of Turkish tobacco for his dark *Caporal*.

"You are determined not to be my debtors," said he. "You are giving me gold for copper.—You are boys—good boys——"

The sentences, spoken in varying tones, were variously emphasized. The words were nothing, but the expression!—That made us friends of ten years' standing at once.

Marcas, on hearing us coming, had covered up his papers; we understood that it would be taking a liberty to allude to

his means of subsistence, and felt ashamed of having watched him. His cupboard stood open; in it there were two shirts, a white necktie, and a razor. The razor made me shudder. A looking-glass, worth five francs perhaps, hung near the window.

The man's few and simple movements had a sort of savage grandeur. The Doctor and I looked at each other, wondering what we could say in reply. Juste, seeing that I was speechless, asked Marcas jestingly:

"You cultivate literature, Monsieur?"

"Far from it!" replied Marcas. "I should not be so wealthy."

"I fancied," said I, "that poetry, alone, in these days, was amply sufficient to provide a man with lodgings as bad as ours."

My remark made Marcas smile, and the smile gave a charm to his yellow face.

"Ambition is not a less severe taskmaster to those who fail," said he. "You, who are beginning life, walk in the beaten paths. Never dream of rising superior, you will be ruined!"

"You advise us to stay just as we are?" said the Doctor, smiling.

There is something so infectious and childlike in the pleasantries of youth, that Marcas smiled again in reply.

"What incidents can have given you this detestable philosophy?" asked I.

"I forgot once more that chance is the result of an immense equation of which we know not all the factors. When we start from zero to work up to the unit, the chances are incalculable. To ambitious men Paris is an immense roulette table, and every young man fancies he can hit on a successful progression of numbers."

He offered us the tobacco I had brought that we might smoke with him; the Doctor went to fetch our pipes; Marcas filled his, and then he came to sit in our room, bringing the tobacco with him, since there were but two chairs in his. Juste, as brisk as a squirrel, ran out, and returned with a

boy carrying three bottles of Bordeaux, some Brie cheese, and a loaf.

"Hah!" said I to myself, "fifteen francs," and I was right to a sou.

Juste gravely laid five francs on the chimney-shelf.

There are immeasurable differences between the gregarious man and the man who lives closest to nature. Toussaint Louverture, after he was caught, died without speaking a word. Napoleon, transplanted to a rock, talked like a magpie—he wanted to account for himself. Z. Marcas erred in the same way, but for our benefit only. Silence in all its majesty is to be found only in the savage. There never is a criminal who, though he might let his secrets fall with his head into the basket of sawdust, does not feel the purely social impulse to tell them to somebody.

Nay, I am wrong. We have seen one Iroquois of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau who raised the Parisian to the level of the natural savage—a republican, a conspirator, a Frenchman, an old man, who outdid all we have heard of Negro determination, and all that Cooper tells us of the tenacity and coolness of the Redskins under defeat. Morey, the Guatimozin of the "Mountain," preserved an attitude unparalleled in the annals of European justice.

This is what Marcas told us during the small hours, sandwiching his discourse with slices of bread spread with cheese and washed down with wine. All the tobacco was burned out. Now and then the hackney coaches clattering across the Place de l'Odéon, or the omnibuses toiling past, sent up their dull rumbling, as if to remind us that Paris was still close to us.

His family lived at Vitré; his father and mother had fifteen hundred francs a year in the funds. He had received an education gratis in a Seminary, but had refused to enter the priesthood. He felt in himself the fires of immense ambition, and had come to Paris on foot at the age of twenty, the possessor of two hundred francs. He had studied the law, working in an attorney's office, where he had risen to be superior clerk. He had taken his doctor's degree in law,

had mastered the old and modern codes, and could hold his own with the most famous pleaders. He had studied the law of nations, and was familiar with European treaties and international practice. He had studied men and things in five capitals—London, Berlin, Vienna, Petersburg, and Constantinople.

No man was better informed than he as to the rules of the Chamber. For five years he had been reporter of the debates for a daily paper. He spoke extempore and admirably, and could go on for a long time in that deep, appealing voice which had struck us to the soul. Indeed, he proved by the narrative of his life that he was a great orator, a he resembled Berryer in his fervour and in the impetus which commands the sympathy of the masses, and was like Thiers in refinement and skill; but he would have been less diffuse, less in difficulties for a conclusion. He had intended to rise rapidly to power without burdening himself first with the doctrines necessary to begin with, for a man in opposition, but an incubus later to the statesman.

Marcas had learned everything that a real statesman should know; indeed, his amazement was considerable when he had occasion to discern the utter ignorance of men who have risen to the administration of public affairs in France. Though in him it was vocation that had led to study, nature had been generous and bestowed all that cannot be acquired—keen perceptions, self-command, a nimble wit, rapid judgment, decisiveness, and, what is the genius of these men, fertility in resource.

By the time when Marcas thought himself duly equipped, France was torn by intestine divisions arising from the triumph of the House of Orleans over the elder branch of the Bourbons.

The field of political warfare is evidently changed. Civil war henceforth cannot last for long, and will not be fought out in the provinces. In France such struggles will be of brief duration and at the seat of government; and the battle will be the close of the moral contest which will have been brought to an issue by superior minds. This state of things will continue so long as France has her present singular

form of government, which has no analogy with that of any other country; for there is no more resemblance between the English and the French constitutions than between the two lands.

Thus Marcas' place was in the political press. Being poor and unable to secure his election, he hoped to make a sudden appearance. He resolved on making the greatest possible sacrifice for a man of superior intellect, to work as subordinate to some rich and ambitious deputy. Like a second Bonaparte, he sought his Barras; the new Colbert hoped to find a Mazarin. He did immense services, and he did them then and there; he assumed no importance, he made no boast, he did not complain of ingratitude. He did them in the hope that his patron would put him in a position to be elected deputy; Marcas wished for nothing but a loan that might enable him to purchase a house in Paris, the qualification required by law. Richard III asked for nothing but his horse.

In three years Marcas had made his man—one of the fifty supposed great statesmen who are the battledores with which two cunning players toss the ministerial portfolios exactly as the man behind the puppet-show hits Punch against the constable in his street theatre, and counts on always getting paid. This man existed only by Marcas, but he had just brains enough to appreciate the value of his "ghost" and to know that Marcas, if he ever came to the front, would remain there, would be indispensable, while he himself would be translated to the polar zone of the Luxembourg. So he determined to put insurmountable obstacles in the way of his Mentor's advancement and hid his purpose under the semblance of the utmost sincerity. Like all mean men he could dissimulate to perfection and he soon made progress in the ways of ingratitude, for he felt that he must kill Marcas, not to be killed by him. These two men, apparently so united, hated each other as soon as one had once deceived the other.

The politician was made one of a ministry; Marcas remained in the opposition to hinder his man from being attacked; nay, by skilful tactics he won him the applause of the opposition. To excuse himself for not rewarding his subal-

tern, the chief pointed out the impossibility of finding a place suddenly for a man on the other side, without a great deal of manœuvring. Marcas had hoped confidently for a place to enable him to marry, and thus acquire the qualification he so ardently desired. He was two-and-thirty, and the Chamber ere long must be dissolved. Having detected his man in this flagrant act of bad faith, he overthrew him, or at any rate contributed largely to his overthrow, and covered him with mud.

A fallen minister, if he is to rise again to power, must show that he is to be feared; this man, intoxicated by Royal glibness, had fancied that his position would be permanent; he acknowledged his delinquencies; besides confessing them, he did Marcas a small money service, for Marcas had got into debt. He subsidized the newspaper on which Marcas worked, and made him the manager of it.

Though he despised the man, Marcas, who, practically, was being subsidized too, consented to take the part of the fallen minister. Without unmasking at once all the batteries of his superior intellect, Marcas came a little further than before; he showed half his shrewdness. The Ministry lasted only a hundred and eighty days; it was swallowed up. Marcas had put himself into communication with certain deputies, had moulded them like dough, leaving each impressed with a high opinion of his talent; his puppet again became a member of the Ministry, and then the paper was ministerial. The Ministry united the paper with another, solely to squeeze out Marcas, who in this fusion had to make way for a rich and insolent rival, whose name was well known, and who already had his foot in the stirrup.

Marcas relapsed into utter destitution; his haughty patron well knew the depths into which he had cast him.

Where was he to go? The ministerial papers, privily warned, would have nothing to say to him. The opposition papers did not care to admit him to their offices. Marcas could side neither with the Republicans nor with the Legitimists, two parties whose triumph would mean the overthrow of everything that now is.

"Ambitious men like a fast hold on things," said he with a smile.

He lived by writing a few articles on commercial affairs, and contributed to one of those encyclopedias brought out by speculation and not by learning. Finally a paper was founded, which was destined to live but two years, but which secured his services. From that moment he renewed his connection with the minister's enemies; he joined the party who were working for the fall of the Government; and as soon as his pickaxe had free play, it fell.

This paper had now for six months ceased to exist; he had failed to find employment of any kind; he was spoken of as a dangerous man, calumny attacked him; he had unmasked a huge financial and mercantile job by a few articles and a pamphlet. He was known to be the mouthpiece of a banker who was said to have paid him largely, and from whom he was supposed to expect some patronage in return for his championship. Marcas, disgusted by men and things, worn out by five years of fighting, regarded as a free lance rather than as a great leader, crushed by the necessity for earning his daily bread, which hindered him from gaining ground, in despair at the influence exerted by money over mind, and given over to dire poverty, buried himself in a garret, to make thirty sous a day, the sum strictly answering to his needs. Meditation had leveled a desert all round him. He read the papers to be informed of what was going on. Pozzo di Borgo had once lived like this for some time.

Marcas, no doubt, was planning a serious attack, accustomed himself to dissimulation, and punishing himself for his blunders by Pythagorean muteness. But he did not tell us the reasons for his conduct.

It is impossible to give you an idea of the scenes of the highest comedy that lay behind this algebraic statement of his career; his useless patience dogging the footsteps of fortune, which presently took wings, his long tramps over the thorny brakes of Paris, his breathless chases as a petitioner, his attempts to win over fools; the schemes laid only to fail through the influence of some frivolous woman; the meetings with men of business who expected their capital to bring

them places and a peerage, as well as large interest. Then the hopes rising in a towering wave only to break in foam on the shoal; the wonders wrought in reconciling adverse interests which, after working together for a week, fell asunder; the annoyance, a thousand times repeated, of seeing a dunce decorated with the Legion of Honour, and preferred, though as ignorant as a shop-boy to a man of talent. Then, what Marcas called the stratagems of stupidity—you strike a man, and he seems convinced, he nods his head—everything is settled; next day, this india-rubber ball, flattened for a moment, has recovered itself in the course of the night; it is as full of wind as ever; you must begin all over again; and you go on till you understand that you are not dealing with a man, but with a lump of gum that loses shape in the sunshine.

These thousand annoyances, this vast waste of human energy on barren spots, the difficulty of achieving any good, the incredible facility of doing mischief; two strong games played out, twice won, and then twice lost; the hatred of a statesman—a blockhead with a painted face and a wig, but in whom the world believed—all these things, great and small, had not crushed, but for the moment had dashed, Marcas. In the days when money had come into his hands, his fingers had not clutched it; he had allowed himself the exquisite pleasure of sending it all to his family—to his sisters, his brothers, his old father. Like Napoleon in his fall, he asked for no more than thirty sous a day, and any man of energy can earn thirty sous for a day's work in Paris.

When Marcas had finished the story of his life, intermingled with reflections, maxims, and observations, revealing him as a great politician, a few questions and answers on both sides as to the progress of affairs in France and in Europe were enough to prove to us that he was a real statesman; for a man may be quickly and easily judged when he can be brought on to the ground of immediate difficulties: there is a certain Shibboleth for men of superior talents, and we were of the tribe of modern Levites without belonging as yet to the Temple. As I have said, our frivolity covered

certain purposes which Juste has carried out, and which I am about to execute.

When we had done talking, we all three went out, cold as it was, to walk in the Luxembourg gardens till the dinner hour. In the course of that walk our conversation, grave throughout, turned on the painful aspects of the political situation. Each of us contributed his remarks, his comment, or his jest, a pleasantry or a proverb. This was no longer exclusively a discussion of life on the colossal scale just described by Marcas, the soldier of political warfare. Nor was it the distressful monologue of the wrecked navigator, stranded in a garret in the Hôtel Corneille; it was a dialogue in which two well-informed young men, having gauged the times they lived in, were endeavouring, under the guidance of a man of talent, to gain some light on their own future prospects.

"Why," asked Juste, "did you not wait patiently for an opportunity, and imitate the only man who has been able to keep the lead since the Revolution of July by holding his head above water?"

"Have I not said that we never know where the roots of chance lie? Carrel was in identically the same position as the orator you speak of. That gloomy young man, of a bitter spirit, had a whole government in his head; the man of whom you speak had no idea beyond mounting on the crupper of every event. Of the two, Carrel was the better man. Well, one became a minister, Carrel remained a journalist; the incomplete but craftier man is living; Carrel is dead.

"I may point out that your man has for fifteen years been making his way, and is but making it still. He may yet be caught and crushed between two cars full of intrigues on the highroad to power. He has no house; he has not the favour of the palace like Metternich; nor, like Villèle, the protection of a compact majority.

"I do not believe that the present state of things will last ten years longer. Hence, supposing I should have such poor good luck, I am already too late to avoid being swept away

by the commotion I foresee. I should need to be established in a superior position."

"What commotion?" asked Juste.

"AUGUST, 1830," said Marcas in solemn tones, holding out his hand towards Paris; "AUGUST, the offspring of Youth which bound the sheaves, and of Intellect which had ripened the harvest, forgot to provide for Youth and Intellect.

"Youth will explode like the boiler of a steam-engine. Youth has no outlet in France; it is gathering an avalanche of underrated capabilities, of legitimate and restless ambitions; young men are not marrying now; families cannot tell what to do with their children. What will the thunderclap be that will shake down these masses? I know not, but they will crash down into the midst of things, and overthrow everything. These are laws of hydrostatics which act on the human race; the Roman Empire had failed to understand them, and the Barbaric hordes came down.

"The Barbaric hordes now are the intelligent class. The laws of overpressure are at this moment acting slowly and silently in our midst. The Government is the great criminal; it does not appreciate the two powers to which it owes everything; it has allowed its hands to be tied by the absurdities of the Contract; it is bound, ready to be the victim.

"Louis XIV., Napoleon, England, all were or are eager for intelligent youth. In France the young are condemned by the new legislation, by the blundering principles of elective rights, by the unsoundness of the ministerial constitution.

"Look at the elective Chamber; you will find no deputies of thirty; the youth of Richelieu and of Mazarin, of Turenne and of Colbert, of Pitt and of Saint-Just, of Napoleon and of Prince Metternich, would find no admission there; Burke, Sheridan, or Fox could not win seats. Even if political majority had been fixed at one-and-twenty, and eligibility had been relieved of every disabling qualification, the Departments would have returned the very same members, men devoid of political talent, unable to speak without murdering French grammar, and among whom, in ten years, scarcely one statesman has been found.

"The causes of an impending event may be seen, but the event itself cannot be foretold. At this moment the youth of France is being driven into Republicanism, because it believes that the Republic would bring it emancipation. It will always remember the young representatives of the people and the young army leaders! The imprudence of the Government is only comparable to its avarice."

That day left its echoes in our lives. Marcas confirmed us in our resolution to leave France, where young men of talent and energy are crushed under the weight of successful commonplace, envious, and insatiable middle age.

We dined together in the Rue de da Harpe. We thenceforth felt for Marcas the most respectful affection; he gave us the most practical aid in the sphere of the mind. That man knew everything; he had studied everything. For us he cast his eye over the whole civilized world, seeking the country where openings would be at once the most abundant and the most favourable to the success of our plans. He indicated what should be the goal of our studies; he bid us make haste, explaining to us that time was precious, that emigration would presently begin, and that its effect would be to deprive France of the cream of its powers and of its youthful talent; that their intelligence, necessarily sharpened, would select the best places, and that the great thing was to be first in the field.

Thenceforward, we often sat late at work under the lamp. Our generous instructor wrote some notes for our guidance—two pages for Juste and three for me—full of invaluable advice—the sort of information which experience alone can supply, such landmarks as only genius can place. In those papers, smelling of tobacco, and covered with writing so vile as to be almost hieroglyphic, there are suggestions for a fortune, and forecasts of unerring acumen. There are hints as to certain parts of America and Asia which have been fully justified, both before and since Juste and I could set out.

Marcas, like us, was in the most abject poverty. He earned, indeed, his daily bread, but he had neither linen, clothes, nor shoes. He did not make himself out any better

than he was; his dreams had been of luxury as well as of power. He did not admit that this was the real Marcas; he abandoned his person, indeed, to the caprices of life. What he lived by was the breath of ambition; he dreamed of revenge while blaming himself for yielding to so shallow a feeling. The true statesman ought, above all things, to be superior to vulgar passions; like the man of science, he should have no passion but for his science. It was in these days of dire necessity that Marcas seemed to us so great—nay, so terrible; there was something awful in the gaze which saw another world than that which strikes the eye of ordinary men. To us he was a subject of contemplation and astonishment; for the young—which of us has not known it?—the young have a keen craving to admire; they love to attach themselves, and are naturally inclined to submit to the men they feel to be superior, as they are to devote themselves to a great cause.

Our surprise was chiefly aroused by his indifference in matters of sentiment; woman had no place in his life. When we spoke of this matter, a perennial theme of conversation among Frenchmen, he simply remarked:

“Gowns cost too much.”

He saw the look that passed between Juste and me, and went on:

“Yes, far too much. The woman you buy—and she is the least expensive—takes a great deal of money. The woman who gives herself takes all your time! Woman extinguishes every energy, every ambition. Napoleon reduced her to what she should be. From that point of view, he really was great. He did not indulge such ruinous fancies of Louis XIV. and Louis XV.; at the same time, he could love in secret.”

We discovered that, like Pitt, who made England his wife, Marcas bore France in his heart; he idolized his country; he had not a thought that was not for his native land. His fury at feeling that he had in his hands the remedy for the evils which so deeply saddened him, and could not apply it, ate into his soul, and this rage was increased by the inferiority of France at that time, as compared with Russia and England. France a third-rate power! This cry came up again and

again in his conversation. The intestinal disorders of his country had entered into his soul. All the contests between the Court and the Chamber, showing, as they did, incessant change and constant vacillation, which must injure the prosperity of the country, he scoffed at as backstairs squabbles.

"This is peace at the cost of the future," said he.

One evening Juste and I were at work, sitting in perfect silence. Marcas had just risen to toil at his copying, for he had refused our assistance in spite of our most earnest entreaties. We had offered to take it in turns to copy a batch of manuscript, so that he should do but a third of his distasteful task; he had been quite angry, and we had ceased to insist.

We heard the sound of gentlemanly boots in the passage, and raised our heads, looking at each other. There was a tap at Marcas' door—he never took the key out of the lock—and we heard the hero answer:

"Come in." Then—"What! you here, monsieur?"

"I myself," replied the retired minister.

It was the Diocletian of this unknown martyr.

For some time he and our neighbour conversed in an undertone. Suddenly Marcas, whose voice had been heard but rarely, as is natural in a dialogue in which the applicant begins by setting forth the situation, broke out loudly in reply to some offer we had not overheard.

"You would laugh at me for a fool," cried he, "if I took you at your word. Jesuits are a thing of the past, but Jesuitism is eternal. Your Machiavelism and your generosity are equally hollow and untrustworthy. You can make your own calculations, but who can calculate on you? Your Court is made up of owls who fear the light, of old men who quake in the presence of the young, or who simply disregard them. The Government is formed on the same pattern as the Court. You have hunted up the remains of the Empire, as the Restoration enlisted the Voltigeurs of Louis XIV.

"Hitherto the evasions of cowardice have been taken for the manœuvring of ability; but dangers will come, and the younger generation will rise as they did in 1790. They did

grand things then.—Just now you change ministries as a sick man turns in his bed; these oscillations betray the weakness of the Government. You work on an underhand system of policy which will be turned against you, for France will be tired of your shuffling. France will not tell you that she is tired of you; a man never knows whence his ruin comes; it is the historian's task to find out; but you will undoubtedly perish as the reward of not having the youth of France to lend you its strength and energy; for having hated really capable men; for not having lovingly chosen them from this noble generation; for having in all cases preferred mediocrity.

"You have come to ask my support, but you are an atom in that decrepit heap which is made hideous by self-interest, which trembles and squirms, and, because it is so mean, tries to make France mean too. My strong nature, my ideas, would work like poison in you; twice you have tricked me, twice have I overthrown you. If we unite a third time, it must be a very serious matter. I should kill myself if I allowed myself to be duped; for I should be to blame, not you."

Then we heard the humblest entreaties, the most fervent adjurations, not to deprive the country of such superior talents. The man spoke of patriotism, and Marcas uttered a significant "*Ouh! ouh!*" He laughed at his would-be patron. Then the statesman was more explicit; he bowed to the superiority of his erstwhile counselor; he pledged himself to enable Marcas to remain in office, to be elected deputy; then he offered him a high appointment, promising him that he, the speaker, would thenceforth be the subordinate of a man whose subaltern he was only worthy to be. He was in the newly-formed ministry, and he would not return to power unless Marcas had a post in proportion to his merit; he had already made it a condition, Marcas had been regarded as indispensable.

Marcas refused.

"I have never before been in a position to keep my promises; here is an opportunity of proving myself faithful to my word, and you fail me."

To this Marcas made no reply. The boots were again audible in the passage on the way to the stairs.

"Marcas! Marcas!" we both cried, rushing into his room. "Why refuse? He really meant it. His offers are very handsome; at any rate, go to see the ministers."

In a twinkling, we had given Marcas a hundred reasons. The minister's voice was sincere; without seeing him, we had felt sure that he was honest.

"I have no clothes," replied Marcas.

"Rely on us," said Juste, with a glance at me.

Marcas had the courage to trust us; a light flashed in his eye, he pushed his fingers through his hair, lifting it from his forehead with a gesture that showed some confidence in his luck; and when he had thus unveiled his face, so to speak, we saw in him a man absolutely unknown to us—Marcas sublime, Marcas in his power! His mind in its element—the bird restored to the free air, the fish to the water, the horse galloping across the plain.

It was transient. His brow clouded again; he had, it would seem, a vision of his fate. Halting doubt had followed close on the heels of white-winged hope.

We left him to himself.

"Now, then," said I to the Doctor, "we have given our word; how are we to keep it?"

"We will sleep upon it," said Juste, "and to-morrow morning we will talk it over."

We had had time to think over the incidents of the past night, and were both equally surprised at the lack of address shown by Marcas in the minor difficulties of life—he, a man who never saw any difficulties in the solution of the hardest problems of abstract or practical politics. But these elevated characters can all be tripped upon a grain of sand, and will, like the grandest enterprise, miss fire for want of a thousand francs. It is the old story of Napoleon, who, for lack of a pair of boots, did not set out for India.

"Well, what have you hit upon?" asked Juste.

"I have thought of a way to get him a complete outfit."

"Where?"

"From Humann."

"How?"

"Humann, my boy, never goes to his customers—his customers go to him; so that he does not know whether I am rich or poor. He only knows that I dress well and look decent in the clothes he makes for me. I shall tell him that an uncle of mine has dropped in from the country, and that his indifference in matters of dress is quite a discredit to me in the upper circles where I am trying to find a wife.—It will not be Humann if he sends in his bill before three months."

The Doctor thought this a capital idea for a vaudeville, but poor enough in real life, and doubted my success. But I give you my word of honour, Humann dressed Marcas, and, being an artist, turned him out as a political personage ought to be dressed.

Juste lent Marcas two hundred francs in gold, the product of two watches bought on credit, and pawned at the Mont-de-Piété. For my part, I had said nothing of six shirts and all necessary linen, which cost me no more than the pleasure asking for them from a forewoman in a shop whom I had treated to Musard's during the carnival.

Marcas accepted everything, thanking us no more than he ought. He only inquired as to the means by which we had got possession of such riches, and we made him laugh for the last time. We looked on our Marcas as shipowners, when they have exhausted their credit and every resource at their command to fit out a vessel, must look on it as it puts to sea.

Here Charles was silent; he seemed crushed by his memories.

"Well," cried the audience, "and what happened?"

"I will tell you in a few words—for this is not romance—it is history."

We saw no more of Marcas. The administration lasted for three months; it fell at the end of the session. Then Marcas came back to us, worked to death. He had sounded the crater of power; he came away from it with the beginnings of brain fever. The disease made rapid progress; we nursed him. Juste at once called in the chief physician of the hospital where he was working as house-surgeon. I was then living alone in our room, and I was the most attentive

attendant; but care and science alike were in vain. By the month of January, 1838, Marcas himself felt that he had but a few days to live.

The man whose soul and brain he had been for six months never even sent to inquire after him. Marcas expressed the greatest contempt for the Government; he seemed to doubt what the fate of France might be, and it was this doubt that had made him ill. He had, he thought, detected treason in the heart of power, not tangible, seizable treason, the result of facts, but the treason of a system, the subordination of national interests to selfish ends. His belief in the degradation of the country was enough to aggravate his complaint.

I myself was witness to the proposals made to him by one of the leaders of the antagonistic party which he had fought against. His hatred of the men he had tried to serve was so virulent, that he would gladly have joined the coalition that was about to be formed among certain ambitious spirits who, at least, had one idea in common—that of shaking off the yoke of the Court. But Marcas could only reply to the envoy in the words of the Hôtel de Ville:

“It is too late!”

Marcas did not leave money enough to pay for his funeral. Juste and I had great difficulty in saving him from the ignominy of a pauper’s bier, and we alone followed the coffin of Z. Marcas, which was dropped into the common grave of the cemetery of Mont-Parnasse.

We looked sadly at each other as we listened to this tale, the last we heard from the lips of Charles Rabourdin the day before he embarked at le Havre on a brig that was to convey him to the islands of Malay. We all knew more than one Marcas, more than one victim of his devotion to a party, repaid by betrayal or neglect.

THE VENUS OF ILLE

(*La Vénus d'Ille*)

By PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

Ἰλαδὺς ἦν δ' ἑγὼ, ἦτορ δ' ἀνδρείας
καὶ ἥμος, οὕτως ἀνδρεὺς ἦν.

ΔΟΥΚΙΑΝΟΥ ΦΙΛΟΦΥΛΗΞ.

I WAS descending the last slope of Canigou, and, although the sun had already set, I could distinguish in the plain below the houses of the little town of Ille, for which I was bound.

"You know," I said to the Catalan who had been acting as my guide since the preceding day, "you know, doubtless, where Monsieur de Peyrehorade lives?"

"Do I know!" he cried; "why, I know his house as well as I do my own; and if it wasn't so dark, I'd show it to you. It's the finest house in Ille. He has money, you know, has Monsieur de Peyrehorade; and his son is going to marry a girl that's richer than himself."

"Is the marriage to take place soon?" I asked.

"Soon! It may be that the fiddles are already ordered for the wedding. To-night, perhaps, or to-morrow, or the day after, for all I know! It's to be at Puygarrig; for it's Mademoiselle de Puygarrig that the young gentleman is going to marry."

I had a letter of introduction to M. de Peyrehorade from my friend M. de P. He was, so my friend had told me, a very learned antiquarian, and good-natured and obliging to the last degree. He would take pleasure in showing me all the ruins within a radius of ten leagues. Now, I relied upon

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him to accompany me about the country near Ille, which I knew to be rich in monuments of ancient times and of the Middle Ages. This marriage, of which I now heard for the first time, might upset all my plans.

"I shall be an interloper," I said to myself.

But I was expected; as my arrival had been announced by M. de P., I must needs present myself.

"I'll bet you, monsieur," said my guide, as we reached the foot of the mountain, "I'll bet you a cigar that I can guess what you are going to do at Monsieur de Peyrehorade's."

"Why, that is not very hard to guess," I replied, offering him a cigar. "At this time of day, when one has walked six leagues over Canigou, the most urgent business is supper."

"Yes, but to-morrow? Look you, I'll bet that you have come to Ille to see the idol! I guessed that when I saw you drawing pictures of the saints at Serrabona."

"The idol! what idol?" The word had aroused my curiosity.

"What! didn't any one at Perpignan tell you how Monsieur de Peyrehorade had found an idol in the ground?"

"You mean a terra-cotta, or clay statue, don't you?"

"No, indeed! I mean a copper one, and it's big enough to make a lot of big sous. It weighs as much as a church bell. It was way down in the ground, at the foot of an olive tree, that we found it."

"So you were present at the discovery, were you?"

"Yes, monsieur. Monsieur de Peyrehorade told us a fortnight ago, Jean Coll and me, to dig up an old olive tree that got frozen last year—for it was a very hard winter, you know. So, while we were at work, Jean Coll, who was going at it with all his might, dug his pick into the dirt, and I heard a *bimm*—just as if he'd struck a bell.—'What's that?' says I. We kept on digging and digging, and first a black hand showed; it looked like a dead man's hand sticking out of the ground. For my part, I was scared. I goes to monsieur, and I says to him: 'Dead men under the olive tree, master. You'd better call the curé.'

"What dead men?" he says.

"He went with me, and he'd no sooner seen the hand than he sings out: 'An antique! an antique!' You'd have thought he had found a treasure. And to work he went with the pick and with his hands, and did as much as both of us together, you might say."

"Well, what did you find?"

"A tall black woman more than half naked, saving your presence, monsieur, of solid copper; and Monsieur de Peyrehorade told us that it was an idol of heathen times—of the time of Charlemagne!"

"I see what it is: a bronze Blessed Virgin from some dismantled convent."

"A Blessed Virgin! oh, yes! I should have recognised it if it had been a Blessed Virgin. It's an idol, I tell you; you can see that from its expression. It fastens its great white eyes on you; you'd think it was trying to stare you out of countenance. Why, you actually lower your eyes when you look at it."

"White eyes? They are incrustated on the bronze, no doubt. It may be some Roman statue."

"Roman! that's it. Monsieur de Peyrehorade says she's a Roman.—Ah! I see that you're a scholar like him."

"Is it whole, well preserved?"

"Oh! it's all there, monsieur. It's even handsomer and finished better than the plaster-of-Paris bust of Louis Philippe at the mayor's office. But for all that, I can't get over the idol's face. It has a wicked look—and she is wicked, too."

"Wicked! what harm has she done you?"

"None to me exactly; but I'll tell you. We had got down on all fours to stand her up, and Monsieur de Peyrehorade, he was pulling on the rope, too, although he hasn't any more strength than a chicken, the excellent man! With a good deal of trouble we got her on her feet. I was picking up a piece of stone to wedge her, when, *patatras!* down she went again, all in a heap. 'Stand from under!' says I. But I was too late, for Jean Coll didn't have time to pull out his leg."

"And he was hurt?"

"His poor leg broken off short like a stick! *Pécaïre!* when I saw that, I was furious. I wanted to smash the idol with my pickaxe, but Monsieur de Peyrehorade held me back. He gave Jean Coll some money, but he's been in bed all the same ever since it happened, a fortnight ago, and the doctor says he'll never walk with that leg like the other. It's a pity, for he was our best runner, and next to Monsieur's son, the best tennis player. I tell you, it made Monsieur Alphonse de Peyrehorade feel bad, for Coll always played with him. It was fine to see how they'd send the balls back at each other. Paf! paf! They never touched the ground."

Chatting thus we entered Ille, and I soon found myself in M. de Peyrehorade's presence. He was a little old man, still hale and active, with powdered hair, a red nose, and a jovial, bantering air. Before opening M. de P.'s letter, he installed himself in front of a bountifully spread table, and introduced me to his wife and son as an illustrious archæologist, who was destined to rescue Roussillon from the oblivion in which the indifference of scholars had thus far left it.

While eating with a hearty appetite—for nothing is more conducive thereto than the keen mountain air—I examined my hosts. I have already said a word or two of M. de Peyrehorade; I must add that he was vivacity personified. He talked, ate, rose from his chair, ran to his library, brought books to me, showed me prints, filled my glass; he was never at rest for two minutes in succession. His wife, who was a trifle too stout, like all the Catalan women after they have passed forty, impressed me as a typical provincial, who had no interests outside her household. Although the supper was ample for at least six persons, she ran to the kitchen, ordered pigeons killed, all sorts of things fried, and opened Heaven knows how many jars of preserves. In an instant the table was laden with dishes and bottles, and I should certainly have died of indigestion if I had even tasted everything that was offered me. And yet, with every new dish that I declined, there were renewed apologies. She was afraid that I would find myself very badly off at Ille. One

had so few resources in the provinces, and Parisians were so hard to please!

Amid all the goings and comings of his parents, M. Alphonse de Peyrehorade sat as motionless as the god Terminus. He was a tall young man of twenty-six, with a handsome and regular face, which, however, lacked expression. His figure and his athletic proportions fully justified the reputation of an indefatigable tennis player which he enjoyed throughout the province. On this evening he was dressed in the height of fashion, exactly in accordance with the engraving in the last number of the *Journal des Modes*. But he seemed ill at ease in his clothes; he was as stiff as a picket in his velvet stock, and moved his whole body when he turned. His rough, sunburned hands and short nails formed a striking contrast to his costume. They were the hands of a ploughman emerging from the sleeves of a dandy. Furthermore, although he scrutinised me with interest from head to foot, I being a Parisian, he spoke to me but once during the evening, and that was to ask me where I bought my watch chain.

"Look you, my dear guest," said M. de Peyrehorade, as the supper drew to a close, "you belong to me, you are in my house; I shall not let you go until you have seen everything of interest that we have in our mountains. You must learn to know our Roussillon, and you must do her justice. You have no suspicion of all that we are going to show you: Phœnician, Celtic, Roman, Arabian, Byzantine monuments—you shall see them all, from the cedar to the hyssop. I will take you everywhere, and I will not let you off a single brick."

A paroxysm of coughing compelled him to pause. I seized the opportunity to say that I should be distressed to incommode him at a season so fraught with interest to his family. If he would simply give me the benefit of his excellent advice as to the excursions it would be well for me to make, I could easily, without putting him to the trouble of accompanying me——

"Ah! you refer to this boy's marriage," he exclaimed, interrupting me. "That's a mere trifle—it will take place

day after to-morrow. You must attend the wedding with us, *en famille*, as the bride is in mourning for an aunt whose property she inherits. So there are to be no festivities, no ball. It is too bad, for you might have seen our Catalan girls dance. They are very pretty, and perhaps you would have felt inclined to follow my Alphonse's example. One marriage, they say, leads to others.—Saturday, when the young people are married, I shall be free, and we will take the field. I ask your pardon for subjecting you to the ennui of a provincial wedding. For a Parisian, sated with parties of all sorts—and a wedding without a ball, at that! However, you will see a bride—a bride—you must tell me what you think of her. But you are a serious man, and you don't look at women any more. I have something better than that to show you. I will show you something worth seeing! I have a famous surprise in store for you to-morrow."

"Mon Dieu!" said I, "it is difficult to keep a treasure in one's house without the public knowing all about it. I fancy that I can divine the surprise that you have in store for me. But if you refer to your statue, the description of it that my guide gave me has served simply to arouse my curiosity and to predispose me to admiration."

"Ah! so he spoke to you about the idol—for that is what they call my beautiful Venus Tur—but I will tell you nothing now. You shall see her to-morrow, by daylight, and tell me whether I am justified in considering her a *chef-d'œuvre*. Parbleu! you could not have arrived more opportunely! There are some inscriptions which I, poor ignoramus that I am, interpret after my manner. But a scholar from Paris! It may be that you will make fun of my interpretation—for I have written a memoir—I, who speak to you, an old provincial antiquary, have made a start; I propose to make the printing-presses groan. If you would kindly read and correct me, I might hope. For example, I am very curious to know how you will translate this inscription on the pedestal: CAVE—but I won't ask you anything yet. Until to-morrow! until to-morrow! Not a word about the Venus to-day!"

"You are quite right, Peyrehorade," said his wife, "to let your old idol rest. You must see that you are keeping monsieur from eating. Bah! monsieur has seen much finer statues than yours in Paris. There are dozens of them at the Tuileries, and bronze ones, too."

"There you have the ignorance, the blessed ignorance of the provinces!" interrupted M. de Peyrehorade. "Think of comparing an admirable antique to Coustou's insipid figures!

"With what irreverence
Doth my good wife speak of the gods!"

Would you believe that my wife wanted me to melt my statue and make it into a bell for our church! She would have been the donor, you see. A *chef-d'œuvre* of Myron, monsieur!"

"*Chef-d'œuvre! chef-d'œuvre!* a pretty *chef-d'œuvre* she made! to break a man's leg!"

"Look you, my wife," said M. de Peyrehorade in a determined tone, extending his right leg encased in a stocking of Chinese silk, in her direction, "if my Venus had broken this leg, I should not regret it."

"Gracious Heaven! how can you say that, Peyrehorade? Luckily the man is getting better. Still, I can't make up my mind to look at the statue that causes such accidents as that. Poor Jean Coll!"

"Wounded by Venus, monsieur," said M. de Peyrehorade, with a chuckle, "wounded by Venus, the clown complains:

"Veneris nec præmia noris."

"Who has not been wounded by Venus?"

M. Alphonse, who understood French better than Latin, winked with a knowing look, and glanced at me as if to ask:

"And you, Monsieur le Parisien, do you understand?"

The supper came to an end. I had eaten nothing for the last hour. I was tired and I could not succeed in dissembling the frequent yawns which escaped me. Madame de Peyrehorade was the first to notice my plight and observed

that it was time to go to bed. Thereupon began a new series of apologies for the wretched accommodations I was to have. I should not be as comfortable as I was in Paris. One is so badly off in the provinces! I must be indulgent for the Roussillonnais. In vain did I protest that after a journey in the mountains a sheaf of straw would be a luxurious bed for me—she continued to beg me to excuse unfortunate country folk if they did not treat me as well as they would have liked to do. I went upstairs at last to the room allotted to me, escorted by M. de Peyrehorade. The staircase, the upper stairs of which were of wood, ended in the centre of a corridor upon which several rooms opened.

"At the right," said my host, "is the apartment which I intend to give to Madame Alphonse that is to be. Your room is at the end of the opposite corridor. You know," he added, with an expression meant to be sly, "you know we must put a newly married couple all by themselves. You are at one end of the house and they at the other."

We entered a handsomely furnished room, in which the first object that caught my eye was a bed seven feet long, six feet wide, and so high that one had to use a stool to climb to the top. My host, having pointed out the location of the bell, having assured himself that the sugarbowl was full, and that the bottles of cologne had been duly placed on the dressing-table, and having asked me several times if I had everything that I wanted, wished me a good-night and left me alone.

The windows were closed. Before undressing I opened one of them to breathe the fresh night air, always delicious after a long supper. In front of me was Canigou, beautiful to look at always, but that evening, it seemed to me the most beautiful mountain in the world, lighted as it was by a brilliant moon. I stood for some minutes gazing at its wonderful silhouette, and was on the point of closing my window when, as I lowered my eyes, I saw the statue on a pedestal some forty yards from the house. It was placed at the corner of a quickset hedge which separated a small garden from a large square of perfectly smooth turf, which, as I learned later, was the tennis-court of the town. This

tract, which belonged to M. de Peyrehorade, had been ceded by him to the commune, at his son's urgent solicitation.

I was so far from the statue that I could not distinguish its attitude and could only guess at its height, which seemed to be about six feet. At that moment two young scamps from the town walked across the tennis-court, quite near the hedge, whistling the pretty Roussillon air, *Montagnes Régales*. They stopped to look at the statue, and one of them apostrophised it in a loud voice. He spoke Catalan; but I had been long enough in Roussillon to understand pretty nearly what he said.

"So there you are, hussy! (The Catalan term was much more forcible.) So there you are!" he said. "So it was you who broke Jean Coll's leg! If you belonged to me, I'd break your neck!"

"Bah! with what?" said the other. "She's made of copper, and it's so hard that Etienne broke his file, trying to file it. It's copper of the heaten times, and it's harder than I don't know what."

"If I had my cold-chisel"—it seemed that he was a locksmith's apprentice—"I'd soon dig out her big white eyes, as easy as I'd take an almond out of its shell. They'd make more than a hundred sous in silver."

They walked away a few steps.

"I must bid the idol good-night," said the taller of the two, suddenly stopping again.

He stooped, and, I suppose, picked up a stone. I saw him raise his arm and throw something, and instantly there was a ringing blow on the bronze. At the same moment the apprentice put his hand to his head, with a sharp cry of pain.

"She threw it back at me!" he exclaimed.

And my two rascals fled at the top of their speed. It was evident that the stone had rebounded from the metal, and had punished the fellow for his affront to the goddess.

I closed my window, laughing heartily.

"Still another vandal chastised by Venus!" I thought. "May all the destroyers of our ancient monuments have their heads broken thus!"

And with that charitable prayer, I fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when I woke. Beside my bed were, on one side, M. de Peyrehorade in his *robe-de-chambre*; on the other a servant, sent by his wife, with a cup of chocolate in his hand.

"Come, up with you, Parisian! This is just like you sluggards from the capital!" said my host, while I hastily dressed myself. "It is eight o'clock, and you are still in bed. I have been up since six. This is the third time I have come upstairs; I came to your door on tiptoe; not a sound, not a sign of life. It will injure you to sleep too much at your age. And you haven't seen my Venus yet! Come, drink this cup of Barcelona chocolate quickly. Genuine contraband, such chocolate as you don't get in Paris. You must lay up some strength, for, when you once stand in front of my Venus, I shall not be able to tear you away from her."

In five minutes I was ready—that is to say, half shaved, my clothes half buttoned, and my throat scalded by the chocolate, which I had swallowed boiling hot. I went down into the garden and found myself before a really beautiful statue.

It was, in truth, a Venus, and wonderfully lovely. The upper part of the body was nude, as the ancients ordinarily represented the great divinities; the right hand, raised as high as the breast, was turned with the palm inward, the thumb and first two fingers extended, the other two slightly bent. The other hand was near the hip and held the drapery that covered the lower part of the body. The pose of the statue recalled that of the Morra Player, usually known, I know not why, by the name of Germanicus. Perhaps the sculptor intended to represent the goddess playing the game of morra.

However that may be, it is impossible to imagine anything more perfect than the body of that Venus; anything more harmonious, more voluptuous than her outlines, anything more graceful and more dignified than her drapery. I expected to see some work of the later Empire; I saw a *chef-d'œuvre* of the best period of statuary. What especially

struck me was the exquisite verisimilitude of the forms, which one might have believed to have been moulded from nature, if nature ever produced such flawless models.

The hair, which was brushed back from the forehead, seemed to have been gilded formerly. The head, which was small, like those of almost all Greek statues, was bent slightly forward. As for the face, I shall never succeed in describing its peculiar character; it was of a type which in no wise resembled that of any antique statue that I can remember. It was not the tranquil, severe beauty of the Greek sculptors, who systematically imparted a majestic immobility to all the features. Here, on the contrary, I observed with surprise a clearly marked intention on the part of the artist to express mischievousness amounting almost to deviltry. All the features were slightly contracted; the eyes were a little oblique, the corners of the mouth raised, the nostrils a little dilated. Disdain, irony, cruelty could be read upon that face, which none the less was inconceivably lovely. In truth, the more one looked at that marvelous statue, the more distressed one felt at the thought that such wonderful beauty could be conjoined to utter absence of sensibility.

"If the model ever existed," I said to Mr. Peyrehorade,—
"and I doubt whether Heaven ever produced such a woman—how I pity her lovers! She must have delighted in driving them to death from despair. There is something downright savage in her expression, and yet I never have seen anything so beautiful!"

"'Tis Venus all intent upon her prey!" quoted M. de Peyrehorade, delighted with my enthusiasm.

That expression of infernal irony was heightened perhaps by the contrast between the very brilliant silver eyes and the coating of blackish green with which time had overlaid the whole statue. Those gleaming eyes created a certain illusion which suggested reality, life. I remembered what my guide had said, that she made those who looked at her lower their eyes. That was almost true, and I could not help feeling angry with myself as I realised that I was perceptibly ill at ease before that bronze figure.

"Now that you have admired her in every detail, my dear colleague in antiquarian research," said my host, "let us open a scientific conference, if you please. What do you say to this inscription, which you have not noticed as yet?"

He pointed to the base of the statue, and I read there these words:

CAVE AMANTEM

"*Quid dicis, doctissime?*" ("What do you say, most learned of men?") he asked, rubbing his hands. "Let us see if we shall agree as to the meaning of this *cave amantem*."

"Why there are two possible meanings," I said. "It may be translated: 'Beware of him who loves you—distrust lovers.' But I am not sure that *cave amantem* would be good Latin in that sense. In view of the lady's diabolical expression, I should be inclined to believe rather that the artist meant to put the spectator on his guard against that terrible beauty. So that I should translate: 'Look out for yourself if *she* loves you.'"

"Humph!" ejaculated M. de Peyrehorade; "yes, that is a possible translation; but, with all respect, I prefer the first, which I will develop a little, however. You know who Venus's lover was?"

"She had several."

"Yes, but the first one was Vulcan. Did not the artist mean to say: 'Despite all your beauty, and your scornful air, you shall have a blacksmith, a wretched cripple, for a lover'? A solemn lesson for coquettes, monsieur!"

I could not help smiling, the interpretation seemed to me so exceedingly far-fetched.

"The Latin is a terrible language, with its extraordinary conciseness," I observed, to avoid contradicting my antiquary directly; and I stepped back a few steps, to obtain a better view of the statue.

"One moment, colleague!" said M. de Peyrehorade, seizing my arm, "you have not seen all. There is still another inscription. Stand on the pedestal and look at the right arm."

As he spoke, he helped me to climb up.

I clung somewhat unceremoniously to the neck of the Venus, with whom I was beginning to feel on intimate terms. I even looked her in the eye for an instant, and I found her still more diabolical and still lovelier at close quarters. Then I saw that there were some letters, in what I took to be the antique cursive hand, engraved on the right arm. With the aid of a strong glass I spelled out what follows, M. de Peyrehorade repeating each word as I pronounced it, and expressing his approbation with voice and gesture. I read:

VENERI TVRBVL—
EVTYCHES MYRO
IMPERIO FECIT

After the word *trbvl* in the first line several letters seemed to have become effaced, but *trbvl* was perfectly legible.

"Which means?"—queried my host, with a beaming face, and winking maliciously, for he had a shrewd idea that I would not easily handle that *trbvl*.

"There is one word here which I do not understand as yet," I said; "all the rest is simple. 'Eutyches made this offering to Venus by her order.'"

"Excellent. But what do you make of *trbvl*? What is *trbvl*?"

"*Turbvl* puzzles me a good deal. I have tried in vain to think of some known epithet of Venus to assist me. What would you say to *Turbulenta*? Venus, who disturbs, who excites—as you see, I am still engrossed by her evil expression. *Turbulenta* is not a very inapt epithet for Venus," I added modestly, for I was not very well satisfied myself with my explanation.

"Turbulent Venus! Venus the roisterer! Ah! so you think that my Venus is a wine-shop Venus, do you? Not by any means, monsieur; she is a Venus in good society. But I will explain this *trbvl* to you. Of course you will promise not to divulge my discovery before my memoir is printed. You see, I am very proud of this find of mine. You must leave us poor devils in the provinces a few

appears to glean. You are so rich, you Parisian scholars!"

From the top of the pedestal, whereon I was still perched, I solemnly promised him that I would never be guilty of the baseness of stealing his discovery.

"*Turbul*—monsieur," he said, coming nearer to me and lowering his voice, for fear that some other than myself might hear—"read *turbulnera*."

"I don't understand any better."

"Listen. About a league from here, at the foot of the mountain, is a village called Boulternère. That name is a corruption of the Latin word *Turbulnera*. Nothing is more common than such inversions. Boulternère, monsieur, was a Roman city. I have always suspected as much, but I have never had a proof of it. Here is the proof. This Venus was the local divinity of the city of Boulternère; and this word Boulternère, whose antique origin I have just demonstrated, proves something even more interesting—namely, that Boulternère, before it became a Roman city, was a Phœnician city!"

He paused a moment to take breath and to enjoy my surprise. I succeeded in restraining a very strong inclination to laugh.

"It is a fact," he continued, "*Turbulnera* is pure Phœnician; *Tur*, pronounced *Tour*—*Tour* and *Sour* are the same word, are they not? *Sour* is the Phœnician name of Tyre; I do not need to remind you of its meaning. *Bul* is Baal; Bal, Bel, Bur—slight differences in pronunciation. As for *nera*—that gives me a little trouble. I am inclined to believe, failing to find a Phœnician word, that it comes from the Greek word *νηρός*, damp, swampy. In that case the word would be a hybrid. To justify my suggestion of *νηρός*, I will show you that at Boulternère the streams from the mountain form miasmatic pools. On the other hand, the termination *nera* may have been added much later, in honour of Nera Pivesuvia, wife of Tetricus, who may have had some property in the city of Turbul. But on account of the pools I prefer the etymology from *νηρός*."

And he took a pinch of snuff with a self-satisfied air.

"But let us leave the Phœnicians and return to the in-

scription. I translate then: 'To Venus of Boulternère, Myron, at her command, dedicates this statue, his work.'"

I had no idea of criticising his etymology, but I did desire to exhibit some little penetration on my own part; so I said to him:

"Stop there a moment, monsieur. Myron dedicated something, but I see nothing to indicate that it was this statue."

"What!" he cried, "was not Myron a famous Greek sculptor? The talent probably was handed down in the family; it was one of his descendants who executed this statue. Nothing can be more certain."

"But," I rejoined, "I see a little hole in the arm. I believe that it was made to fasten something to—a bracelet, perhaps, which this Myron presented to Venus as an expiatory offering.—Myron was an unsuccessful lover; Venus was irritated with him and he appeased her by consecrating a gold bracelet to her. Observe that *fecit* is very often used in the sense of *consecravit*; they are synonymous terms. I could show you more than one example of what I say if I had Gruter or Orellius at hand. It would be quite natural for a lover to see Venus in a dream and to fancy that she ordered him to give a gold bracelet to her statue. So Myron consecrated a bracelet to her; then the barbarians, or some sacrilegious thief——"

"Ah! it is easy to see that you have written novels!" cried my host, giving me his hand to help me descend. "No, monsieur, it is a work of the school of Myron. Look at the workmanship simply and you will agree."

Having made it a rule never to contradict outright an obstinate antiquarian, I hung my head with the air of one fully persuaded, saying:

"It's an admirable thing."

"Ah! mon Dieu!" cried M. de Peyrehorade; "still another piece of vandalism! Somebody must have thrown a stone at my statue!"

He had just discovered a white mark a little above Venus's breast. I observed a similar mark across the fingers of the right hand, which I then supposed had been

grazed by the stone; or else that a fragment of the stone had been broken off by the blow and had bounded against the hand. I told my host about the insult that I had witnessed, and the speedy retribution that had followed. He laughed heartily, and, comparing the apprentice to Diomedes, expressed a hope that, like the Grecian hero, he might see all his companions transformed into birds.

The breakfast bell interrupted this classical conversation, and I was again obliged, as on the preceding day, to eat for four. Then M. de Peyrehorade's farmers appeared; and while he gave audience to them, his son took me to see a calèche which he had bought at Toulouse for his fiancée, and which I admired, it is needless to say. Then I went with him into the stable, where he kept me half an hour, boasting of his horses, giving me their genealogies, and telling me of the prizes they had won at various races in the province. At last he reached the subject of his future wife, by a natural transition from a grey mare he intended for her.

"We shall see her to-day," he said. "I do not know whether you will think her pretty; but everybody here and at Perpignan considers her charming. The best thing about her is that she's very rich. Her aunt at Prades left her all her property. Oh! I am going to be very happy."

I was intensely disgusted to see a young man more touched by the dowry than by the *beaux yeux* of his betrothed.

"You know something about jewels," continued M. Alphonse; "what do you think of this one? This is the ring that I am going to give her to-morrow."

As he spoke, he took from the first joint of his little finger a huge ring with many diamonds, made in the shape of two clasped hands; an allusion which seemed to me exceedingly poetical. The workmanship was very old, but I judged that it had been changed somewhat to allow the diamonds to be set. On the inside of the ring were these words in Gothic letters: *Sempr' ab ti*; that is to say, "Always with thee."

"It is a handsome ring," I said, "but these diamonds have taken away something of its character."

"Oh! it is much handsomer so," he replied, with a smile. "There are twelve hundred francs' worth of diamonds. My mother gave it to me. It was a very old family ring—of the times of chivalry. It belonged to my grandmother, who had it from hers. God knows when it was made."

"The custom in Paris," I said, "is to give a very simple ring, usually made of two different metals, as gold and platinum, for instance. See, that other ring, which you wear on this finger, would be most suitable. This one, with its diamonds and its hands in relief, is so big that one could not wear a glove over it."

"Oh! Madame Alphonse may arrange that as she pleases. I fancy that she will be very glad to have it all the same. Twelve hundred francs on one's finger is very pleasant. This little ring," he added, glancing fatuously at the plain one which he wore, "was given me by a woman in Paris one Mardi Gras. Ah! how I did go it when I was in Paris two years ago! That's the place where one enjoys one's self!"

And he heaved a sigh of regret.

We were to dine that day at Puygarrig with the bride's parents; we drove in the calèche to the château, about a league and a half from Ille. I was presented and made welcome as a friend of the family. I will say nothing of the dinner or of the conversation which followed it, and in which I took little part. M. Alphonse, seated beside his fiancée, said a word in her ear every quarter of an hour. As for her, she hardly raised her eyes, and whenever her future husband addressed her she blushed modestly, but replied without embarrassment.

Mademoiselle de Puygarrig was eighteen years of age; her supple and delicate figure formed a striking contrast to the bony frame of her athletic fiancé. She was not only lovely, but fascinating. I admired the perfect naturalness of all her replies; and her good-humoured air, which however was not exempt from a slight tinge of mischief, reminded me, in spite of myself, of my host's Venus. As I made this

comparison mentally, I asked myself whether the superiority in the matter of beauty which I could not choose but accord to the statue, did not consist in large measure in her tigress-like expression; for energy, even in evil passions, always arouses in us a certain surprise and a sort of involuntary admiration.

"What a pity," I said to myself as we left Puygarrig, "that such an attractive person should be rich, and that her dowry should cause her to be sought in marriage by a man who is unworthy of her!"

On the way back to Ille, finding some difficulty in talking with Madame de Peyrehorade, whom, however, I thought it only courteous to address now and then, I exclaimed:

"You are very strong-minded here in Roussillon! To think of having a wedding on a Friday, madame! We are more superstitious in Paris; no one would dare to take a wife on that day."

"Mon Dieu! don't mention it," said she; "if it had depended on me, they certainly would have chosen another day. But Peyrehorade would have it so, and I had to give way to him. It distresses me, however. Suppose anything should happen? There must surely be some reason for the superstition, for why else should every one be afraid of Friday?"

"Friday!" cried her husband; "Friday is Venus's day! A splendid day for a wedding! You see, my dear colleague. I think of nothing but my Venus. On my honour, it was on her account that I chose a Friday. To-morrow, if you are willing, before the wedding, we will offer a little sacrifice to her; we will sacrifice two pigeons, if I can find any incense."

"For shame, Peyrehorade!" his wife interposed, scandalised to the last degree. "Burn incense to an idol! That would be an abomination! What would people in the neighbourhood say about you?"

"At least," said M. de Peyrehorade, "you will allow me to place a wreath of roses and lilies on her head:

"*'Manibus date lilia plenis.'*"

The charter, you see, monsieur, is an empty word; we have no freedom of worship!"

The order of ceremonies for the following day was thus arranged: everybody was to be fully dressed and ready at precisely ten o'clock. After taking a cup of chocolate, we were to drive to Puygarrig. The civil ceremony would take place at the mayor's office of that village, and the religious ceremony in the chapel of the château. Then there would be a breakfast. After that, we were to pass the time as best we could until seven o'clock, when we were to return to Ile, to M. de Peyrehorade's, where the two families were to sup together. The rest followed as a matter of course. Being unable to dance, the plan was to eat as much as possible.

At eight o'clock I was already seated in front of the Venus, pencil in hand, beginning for the twentieth time to draw the head of the statue, whose expression I was still absolutely unable to catch. M. de Peyrehorade hovered about me, gave me advice, and repeated his Phœnician etymologies; then he arranged some Bengal roses on the pedestal of the statue, and in a tragi-comic tone addressed supplications to it for the welfare of the couple who were to live under his roof. About nine o'clock he returned to the house to dress, and at the same time M. Alphonse appeared, encased in a tightly fitting new coat, white gloves, patent-leather shoes, and carved buttons, with a rose in his buttonhole.

"Will you paint my wife's portrait?" he asked, leaning over my drawing; "she is pretty, too."

At that moment a game of tennis began on the court I have mentioned, and it immediately attracted M. Alphonse's attention. And I myself, being rather tired, and hopeless of being able to reproduce that diabolical face, soon left my drawing to watch the players. Among them were several Spanish muleteers who had arrived in the town the night before. There were Aragonese and Navarrese, almost all wonderfully skillful at the game. So that the men of Ile, although encouraged by the presence and counsels of M. Alphonse, were speedily beaten by these new champions. The native spectators were appalled. M. Alphonse glanced

at his watch. It was only half after nine. His mother's hair was not dressed. He no longer hesitated, but took off his coat, asked for a jacket, and challenged the Spaniards. I watched him, smiling at his eagerness, and a little surprised.

"I must uphold the honour of the province," he said to me.

At that moment I considered him really handsome. He was thoroughly in earnest. His costume, which engrossed him so completely a moment before, was of no consequence. A few minutes earlier he was afraid to turn his head for fear of disarranging his cravat. Now, he paid no heed to his carefully curled locks, or to his beautifully laundered ruff. And his fiancée?—Faith, I believe that, if it had been necessary, he would have postponed the wedding. I saw him hastily put on a pair of sandals, turn back his sleeves, and with an air of confidence take his place at the head of the beaten side, like Cæsar rallying his legions at Dyrrhachium. I leaped over the hedge and found a convenient place in the shade of a plum-tree, where I could see both camps.

Contrary to general expectation, M. Alphonse missed the first ball; to be sure, it skimmed along the ground, driven with astounding force by an Aragonese who seemed to be the leader of the Spaniards.

He was a man of some forty years, thin and wiry, about six feet tall; and his olive skin was almost as dark as the bronze of the Venus.

M. Alphonse dashed his racquet to the ground in a passion.

"It was this infernal ring," he cried: "it caught my finger and made me miss a sure ball!"

He removed the diamond ring, not without difficulty, and I stepped forward to take it; but he anticipated me, ran to the Venus, slipped the ring on her third finger, and resumed his position at the head of his townsmen.

He was pale, but calm and determined. Thereafter he did not make a single mistake, and the Spaniards were completely routed. The enthusiasm of the spectators was

a fine spectacle; some shouted for joy again and again, and tossed their caps in the air; others shook his hands and called him an honour to the province. If he had repelled an invasion, I doubt whether he would have received more enthusiastic and more sincere congratulations. The chagrin of the defeated party added still more to the splendour of his victory.

"We will play again, my good fellow," he said to the Aragonese in a lofty tone; "but I will give you points."

I should have been glad if M. Alphonse had been more modest, and I was almost distressed by his rival's humiliation. The Spanish giant felt the insult keenly. I saw him turn pale under his tanned skin. He glanced with a sullen expression at his racquet, and ground his teeth; then he muttered in a voice choked with rage:

"Me lo pagards!"

M. de Peyrehorade's appearance interrupted his son's triumph. My host, greatly surprised not to find him superintending the harnessing of the new calèche, was much more surprised when he saw him drenched with perspiration, and with his racquet in his hand. M. Alphonse ran to the house, washed his face and hands, resumed his new coat and his patent-leather boots, and five minutes later we were driving rapidly toward Puygarrig. All the tennis players of the town and a great number of spectators followed us with joyous shouts. The stout horses that drew us could hardly keep in advance of those dauntless Catalans.

We had reached Puygarrig, and the procession was about to start for the mayor's office, when M. Alphonse put his hand to his forehead and whispered to me:

"What a fool I am! I have forgotten the ring! It is on the Venus's finger, the devil take her! For Heaven's sake, don't tell my mother. Perhaps she will not notice anything."

"You might send some one to get it," I said.

"No, no! my servant stayed at Ille, and I don't trust these people here. Twelve hundred francs' worth of diamonds! that might be too much of a temptation for more than one of them. Besides, what would they all think of

my absent-mindedness? They would make too much fun of me. They would call me the statue's husband.—However, I trust that no one will steal it. Luckily, all my knaves are afraid of the idol. They don't dare go within arm's length of it.—Bah! it's no matter; I have another ring.”

The two ceremonies, civil and religious, were performed with suitable pomp, and Mademoiselle de Puygarrig received a ring that formerly belonged to a milliner's girl at Paris, with no suspicion that her husband was bestowing upon her a pledge of love. Then we betook ourselves to the table, where we ate and drank, yes, and sang, all at great length. I sympathised with the bride amid the vulgar merriment that burst forth all about her; however, she put a better face on it than I could have hoped, and her embarrassment was neither awkwardness nor affectation. It may be that courage comes of itself with difficult situations.

The breakfast came to an end when God willed; it was four o'clock; the men went out to walk in the park, which was magnificent, or watched the peasant girls of Puygarrig, dressed in their gala costumes, dance on the lawn in front of the château. In this way, we passed several hours. Meanwhile the women were hovering eagerly about the bride, who showed them her wedding gifts. Then she changed her dress, and I observed that she had covered her lovely hair with a cap and a hat adorned with feathers; for there is nothing that wives are in such a hurry to do as to assume as soon as possible those articles of apparel which custom forbids them to wear when they are still unmarried.

It was nearly eight o'clock when we prepared to start for Ille. But before we started there was a pathetic scene. Mademoiselle de Puygarrig's aunt, who had taken the place of a mother to her, a woman of a very advanced age and very religious, was not to go to the town with us. At our departure, she delivered a touching sermon to her niece on her duties as a wife, the result of which was a torrent of tears, and embraces without end. M. de Peyrehorade compared this separation to the abduction of the Sabine women.

We started at last, however, and on the road we all exerted ourselves to the utmost to divert the bride and make her laugh; but it was all to no purpose.

At Ille supper awaited us, and such a supper! If the vulgar hilarity of the morning had disgusted me, I was fairly sickened by the equivocal remarks and jests which were aimed at the groom, and especially at the bride. M. Alphonse, who had disappeared a moment before taking his place at the table, was as pale as death and as solemn as an iceberg. He kept drinking old Collioure wine, almost as strong as brandy. I was by his side and felt in duty bound to warn him.

"Take care! they say that this wine——"

I have no idea what foolish remark I made, to put myself in unison with the other guests.

He pressed my knee with his and said in a very low tone:

"When we leave the table, let me have a word with you."

His solemn tone surprised me. I looked at him more closely and noticed the extraordinary change in his expression.

"Are you feeling ill?" I asked him.

"No."

And he returned to his drinking.

Meanwhile, amid shouts and clapping of hands, a child of eleven years, who had slipped under the table, exhibited to the guests a dainty white and rose-coloured ribbon which he had taken from the bride's ankle. They called that her garter. It was immediately cut into pieces and distributed among the young men, who decorated their buttonholes with them, according to an ancient custom still observed in some patriarchal families. This episode caused the bride to blush to the whites of her eyes. But her confusion reached its height when M. de Peyrehorade, having called for silence, sang some Catalan verses, impromptu, so he said. Their meaning, so far as I understood it, was this:

"Pray, what is this, my friends? Does the wine I have drunk make me see double? There are two Venuses here——"

The bridegroom abruptly turned his head away with a terrified expression which made everybody laugh.

"Yes," continued M. de Peyrehorade, "there are two Venuses beneath my roof. One I found in the earth, like a truffle; the other descended from the skies, has come to share her girdle with us."

He meant to say her garter.

"My son, choose whichever you prefer—the Roman or the Catalan Venus. The rascal chooses the Catalan, and his choice is wise. The Roman is black, the Catalan white. The Roman is cold, the Catalan inflames all who approach her."

This deliverance caused such an uproar, such noisy applause and such roars of laughter, that I thought that the ceiling would fall on our heads. There were only three sober faces at the table—those of the bride and groom, and my own. I had a terrible headache; and then, for some unknown reason, a wedding always depresses me. This one, in addition, disgusted me more or less.

The last couplets having been sung by the mayor's deputy—and they were very free, I must say—we went to the salon to make merry over the retirement of the bride, who was soon to be escorted to her chamber, for it was near midnight.

M. Alphonse led me into a window recess, and said to me, averting his eyes:

"You will laugh at me, but I don't know what the matter is with me; I am bewitched! the devil has got hold of me!"

The first idea that came to my mind was that he believed himself to be threatened by some misfortune of the sort of which Montigne and Madame de Sévigné speak:

"The sway of love is always full of tragic episodes," etc.

"I supposed that accidents of that sort happened only to men of intellect," I said to myself.—"You have drunk too much Collioure wine, my dear Monsieur Alphonse," I said aloud. "I warned you."

"Yes, that may be. But there is something much more terrible than that."

He spoke in a halting voice. I concluded that he was downright tipsy.

"You remember my ring?" he continued, after a pause.

"Well! has it been stolen?"

"No."

"Then you have it?"

"No—I—I can't take it off that infernal Venus's finger!"

"Nonsense! you didn't pull hard enough."

"Yes, I did. But the Venus—she has bent her finger."

He looked me in the eye with a haggard expression, leaning against the window-frame to avoid falling.

"What a fable!" I said. "You pushed the ring on too far. To-morrow you can recover it with a pair of pincers. But take care that you don't injure the statue."

"No, I tell you. The Venus's finger is drawn in, bent; she has closed her hand—do you understand? She is my wife, apparently, as I have given her my ring. She refuses to give it back."

I felt a sudden shiver, and for a moment I was all goose-flesh. Then, as he heaved a profound sigh, he sent a puff of alcoholic fumes into my face, and all my emotion vanished.

"The wretch is completely drunk," I thought.

"You are an antiquary, monsieur," continued the bridegroom in a piteous tone; "you know all about these statues; perhaps there is some spring, some devilish contrivance that I don't know about. Suppose you were to go out and look?"

"Willingly," I said; "come with me."

"No, I prefer that you should go alone."

I left the salon.

The weather had changed while we were at supper, and the rain was beginning to fall violently. I was about to ask for an umbrella when a sudden reflection detained me. "I should be a great fool," I said to myself, "to take any trouble to verify what an intoxicated man tells me! Perhaps, too, he is trying to play some wretched joke on me, in order to give these worthy provincials something to laugh at; and the least that can happen to me is to be drenched to the skin and to catch a heavy cold."

I glanced from the door at the statue, which was dripping wet, and then went up to my room without returning to the salon. I went to bed, but sleep was a long while coming. All the scenes of the day passed through my mind. I thought of that lovely, pure maiden delivered to the tender mercies of a brutal sot. "What a hateful thing a *mariage de convenance* is!" I said to myself. "A mayor dons a tri-coloured scarf, a curé a stole, and lo! the most virtuous girl imaginable is abandoned to the Minotaur! Two persons who do not love each other—what can they have to say at such a moment, which two true lovers would purchase at the cost of their lives? Can a woman ever love a man whom she has once seen make a beast of himself? First impressions are not easily effaced, and I am sure that this Monsieur Alphonse well deserves to be detested."

During my monologue, which I have abridged very materially, I had heard much coming and going about the house, doors opening and closing, carriages driving away; then I fancied that I heard in the hall the light footsteps of several women walking toward the farther end of the corridor opposite my room. It was probably the procession of the bride, who was being escorted to her bedroom. Then I heard the steps go downstairs again. Madame de Peyrehorade's door closed.

"How perturbed and ill at ease that poor child must be," I thought.

I turned and twisted in my bed, in an execrable humour. A bachelor plays an absurd rôle in a house where a marriage is being celebrated.

Silence had reigned for some time, when it was broken by heavy steps ascending the staircase. The wooden stairs creaked loudly.

"What a brute!" I cried. "I'll wager that he will fall on the stairs!"

Everything became quiet once more. I took up a book in order to change the current of my thoughts. It was a volume of departmental statistics, embellished by an article from the pen of M. de Peyrehorade on the druidical re-

mains in the arrondissement of Prades. I dozed at the third page.

I slept badly and woke several times. It might have been five o'clock, and I had been awake more than twenty minutes, when a cock crew. Day was just breaking. Suddenly I heard the same heavy steps, the same creaking of the stairs that I had heard before I fell asleep. That struck me as peculiar. I tried, yawning sleepily, to divine why M. Alphonse should rise so early. I could imagine no probable cause. I was about to close my eyes again when my attention was once more attracted by a strange tramping, to which was soon added the jangling of bells and the noise of doors violently thrown open; then I distinguished confused outcries.

"My drunkard must have set fire to something!" I thought, as I leaped out of bed.

I dressed in hot haste and went out into the corridor. From the farther end came shrieks and lamentations, and one heartrending voice rose above all the rest: "My son! my son!" It was evident that something had happened to M. Alphonse. I ran to the bridal chamber; it was full of people. The first object that caught my eye was the young man, half dressed, lying across the bed, the framework of which was broken. He was livid and absolutely motionless. His mother was weeping and shrieking by his side. M. de Peyrehorade was bustling about, rubbing his temples with eau de cologne, or holding salts to his nose. Alas! his son had been dead a long while.

On a couch, at the other end of the room, was the bride, in frightful convulsions. She was uttering incoherent cries, and two strong maidservants had all the difficulty in the world in holding her.

"Great God!" I cried, "what has happened!"

I walked to the bed and raised the unfortunate young man's body; it was already cold and stiff. His clenched teeth and livid face expressed the most horrible anguish. It seemed perfectly evident that his death had been a violent one, and the death agony indescribably terrible. But there was no sign of blood on his clothes. I opened his

shirt and found on his breast a purple mark which extended around the loins and across the back. One would have said that he had been squeezed by an iron ring. My foot came in contact with something hard on the carpet; I stooped and saw the diamond ring.

I dragged M. de Peyrehorade and his wife to their room; then I caused the bride to be taken thither.

"You still have a daughter," I said to them; "you owe to her your devoted care."

Then I left them alone.

It seemed to me to be beyond question that M. Alphonse had been the victim of a murder, the authors of which had found a way to introduce themselves into the bride's bedroom at night. The marks on the breast and their circular character puzzled me a good deal, however, for a club or an iron bar could not have produced them. Suddenly I remembered having heard that in Valencia the *bravi* used long leather bags filled with fine sand to murder people whom they were hired to kill. I instantly recalled the Aragonese muleteer and his threat; and yet I hardly dared think that he would have wreaked such a terrible vengeance for a trivial jest.

I walked about the house, looking everywhere for traces of a break, and finding nothing. I went down into the garden, to see whether the assassins might have forced their way in on that side of the house; but I found no definite indications. Indeed, the rain of the preceding night had so saturated the ground that it could not have retained any distinct impression. I observed, however, several very deep footprints; they pointed in two opposite directions, but in the same line, leading from the corner of the hedge next the tennis court to the gateway of the house. They might well be M. Alphonse's steps when he went out to take his ring from the finger of the statue. On the other hand, the hedge was less dense at that point than elsewhere, and the murderers might have passed through it there. As I went back and forth in front of the statue, I paused a moment to look at it. That time, I will confess, I was unable to contemplate without terror its expression of devilish irony;

and, with my head full of the horrible scenes I had witnessed, I fancied that I had before me an infernal divinity, exulting over the disaster that had stricken the house.

I returned to my room and remained there till noon. Then I went out and inquired concerning my hosts. They were a little calmer. Mademoiselle de Puygarrig—I should say M. Alphonse's widow—had recovered her senses. She had even talked with the king's attorney from Perpignan, then on circuit at Ille, and that magistrate had taken her deposition. He desired mine also. I told him what I knew and made no secret of my suspicions of the Aragonese muleteer. He ordered that he should be arrested immediately.

"Did you learn anything from Madame Alphonse?" I asked the king's attorney, when my deposition was written out and signed.

"That unfortunate young woman has gone mad," he replied, with a sad smile. "Mad! absolutely mad! This is what she told me:

"She had been in bed, she said, a few minutes, with the curtain drawn, when her bedroom door opened and some one came in. At that time Madame Alphonse was on the inside of the bed, with her face towards the wall. Supposing, of course, that it was her husband, she did not move. A moment later, the bed creaked as if under an enormous weight. She was terribly frightened, but dared not turn her head. Five minutes, ten minutes perhaps,—she can only guess at the time—passed in this way. Then she made an involuntary movement, or else the other person in the bed made one, and she felt the touch of something as cold as ice—that was her expression. She moved closer to the wall, trembling in every limb. Shortly after, the door opened a second time, and some one came in, who said: 'Good-evening, my little wife.' Soon the curtains were drawn aside. She heard a stifled cry. The person who was in the bed by her side sat up and seemed to put out its arms. Thereupon she turned her head, and saw, so she declares, her husband on his knees beside the bed, with his head on a level with the pillow, clasped in the arms of a sort of greenish giant, who was squeezing him with terrible

force. She says—and she repeated it twenty times, poor woman!—she says that she recognised—can you guess whom?—the bronze Venus, M. de Peyrehorade's statue. Since she was unearthed, the whole neighbourhood dreams of her. But I continue the story of that unhappy mad woman. At that sight she lost consciousness, and it is probable that she had lost her reason some moments before. She could give me no idea at all how long she remained in her swoon. Recovering her senses, she saw the phantom, or, as she still insists, the statue, motionless, with its legs and the lower part of the body in the bed, the bust and arms stretched out, and in its arms her husband, also motionless. A cock crew. Thereupon the statue got out of bed, dropped the dead body, and left the room. Madame Alphonse rushed for the bell-cord, and you know the rest."

The Spaniard was arrested; he was calm, and defended himself with much self-possession and presence of mind. He did not deny making the remark I had overheard; but he explained it by saying that he had meant simply this: that, on the following day, having rested meanwhile, he would beat his victorious rival at tennis. I remember that he added:

"An Aragonese, when he is insulted, doesn't wait until the next day for his revenge. If I had thought that Monsieur Alphonse intended to insult me, I would have driven my knife into his belly on the spot."

His shoes were compared with the footprints in the garden, and were found to be much larger.

Lastly, the innkeeper at whose house he was staying deposed that he had passed the whole night rubbing and doctoring one of his mules, which was sick. Furthermore, the Aragonese was a man of excellent reputation, well known in the province, where he came every year in the course of his business. So he was released with apologies.

I have forgotten the deposition of a servant, who was the last person to see M. Alphonse alive. It was just as he was going up to his wife; he called the man and asked him with evident anxiety if he knew where I was. The servant replied that he had not seen me. Thereupon M. Alphonse

sighed and stood more than a minute without speaking; then he said:

"Well! the devil must have taken him away, too!"

I asked him if M. Alphonse had his diamond ring on his finger when he spoke to him. The servant hesitated before he replied; at last he said that he did not think so, but that he had not noticed particularly.

"If he had had that ring on his finger," he added upon reflection, "I should certainly have noticed it, for I thought that he had given it to Madame Alphonse."

As I questioned this man, I was conscious of a touch of the superstitious terror with which Madame Alphonse's deposition had infected the whole household. The king's attorney glanced at me with a smile, and I did not persist.

Some hours after M. Alphonse's funeral, I prepared to leave Ille. M. de Peyrehorade's carriage was to take me to Perpignan. Despite his enfeebled condition, the poor old man insisted upon attending me to his garden gate. We passed through the garden in silence; he, hardly able to drag himself alone, leaning on my arm. As we were about to part, I cast a last glance at the Venus. I foresaw that my host, although he did not share the terror and detestation which she inspired in a portion of his family, would be glad to be rid of an object which would constantly remind him of a shocking calamity. It was my purpose to urge him to place it in some museum. I hesitated about opening the subject, when M. de Peyrehorade mechanically turned his head in the direction in which he saw that I was gazing earnestly. His eye fell upon the statue, and he instantly burst into tears. I embraced him, and, afraid to say a single word, entered the carriage.

I never learned, subsequent to my departure, that any new light had been thrown upon that mysterious catastrophe.

M. de Peyrehorade died a few months after his son. By his will he bequeathed to me his manuscripts, which I shall publish some day, perhaps. I found among them no memoir relating to the inscriptions on the Venus.

P. S.—My friend M. de P. has recently written me from

Perpignan that the statue no longer exists. After her husband's death, Madame de Peyrehorade's first care was to have it melted into a bell, and in that new shape it is now used in the church at Ille.

"But," M. de P. adds, "it would seem that an evil fate pursues all those who possess that bronze. Since that bell has rung at Ille the vines have frozen twice."

1837.

HERODIAS

(*Hérodiás*)

By GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

I

THE citadel of Machærus stood on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, on a cone-shaped basaltic peak. Four deep valleys surrounded it, two on the sides, one in front, the fourth behind. Houses clustered about its base, within the enclosure formed by a wall which rose and fell with the undulations of the ground; and by a zigzag road, hewn in the rock, the town was connected with the fortress, whose walls were one hundred and twenty cubits high, with many angles, battlements on the edge, and here and there towers, forming the ornamentation, as it were, of that crown of stone, suspended over the abyss.

Within there was a palace, adorned with porticoes and sheltered by a terrace, about which ran a balustrade of sycamore-wood, with tall poles arranged to hold a tent.

One morning, before dawn, the Tetrarch Herod Antipas leaned on the balustrade and looked forth.

Immediately beneath him the mountains were beginning to show their peaks, while their dense masses, to the lowest depths of the ravines, were still in shadow. The hovering mist was rent asunder, and the outlines of the Dead Sea appeared. The dawn, breaking behind Machærus, diffused a reddish light. Soon it illuminated the sands on the shore, the hills, the desert, and, farther away, all the mountains of Judea, with their jagged gray slopes. En-Gedi, in the

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centre, formed a black bar; Hebron, in the background, was rounded like a dome; Eshtaol was covered with pomegranates, Sorek with vineyards, Carmel with fields of sesame; and the Tower of Antonia, with its monstrous cube, dominated Jerusalem. The Tetrarch turned his eyes to the right, to gaze upon the palm-trees of Jericho; and he thought of the other cities of his Galilee: Capernaum, Endor, Nazareth, Tiberias, whither perhaps he would never go again. Meanwhile the Jordan flowed through the barren plain. All white, it was as dazzling as a field of snow. Now the lake seemed to be of lapis lazuli; and at its southern point, in the direction of Yemen, Antipas saw what he dreaded to see. Brown tents were scattered here and there; men with lances went to and fro among the horses; and dying fires gleamed like sparks, level with the ground.

They were the troops of the King of the Arabs, whose daughter he had cast aside to take Herodias, wife to one of his brothers, who lived in Italy with no pretension to power.

Antipas was awaiting succour from the Romans; and as Vitellius, Governor of Syria, did not appear, he was consumed with impatience.

Doubtless Agrippa had ruined him in the mind of the Emperor? Philip, his third brother, sovereign of Batanea, was secretly arming. The Jews would have no more of his idolatrous customs, nor all the rest of his domineering sway; so that he was hesitating between two plans: to beguile the Arabs, or to enter into an alliance with the Parthians; and, on the pretext of celebrating his birthday, he had bidden to a great banquet, for that very day, the leaders of his troops, the stewards of his estates, and the chief men of Galilee. With a keen glance he scanned all the roads. They were empty. Eagles flew over his head; the soldiers were sleeping against the walls, along the ramparts; nothing stirred within the castle.

Of a sudden a voice in the distance, as if escaping from the bowels of the earth, made the Tetrarch turn pale. He leaned forward to listen; it had ceased. It began again, and he clapped his hands and called:

"Mannæus! Mannæus!"

A man appeared, naked to the waist, like the masseurs at baths. He was very tall, aged, fleshless, and wore at his hip a cutlass in a copper sheath. His hair, brushed back and held in place by a comb, exaggerated the height of his brow. His eyes were dull with drowsiness, but his teeth gleamed and his toes rested lightly on the flagstones, his whole body having the suppleness of a monkey and his face the impassiveness of a mummy.

"Where is he?" asked the Tetrarch.

Mannæus replied, pointing with his thumb to something behind them:

"There! still there!"

"I thought that I heard him!"

And Antipas, having drawn a long breath of relief, inquired concerning Iaokanann, the same man whom the Latins called St. John the Baptist. Had those two men been seen again who had been admitted as a favour to his dungeon some months before; and had the purpose with which they had come been learned since?

Mannæus replied:

"They exchanged some words with him in secret, like thieves at a cross-roads in the night. Then they went away towards Upper Galilee, announcing that they were the bearers of great tidings."

Antipas hung his head, then exclaimed in a tone of alarm:

"Keep him! keep him! And let no one enter! Lock the door fast! Cover the hole! None must even suspect that he lives!"

Before receiving these orders Mannæus had carried them out; for Iaokanann was a Jew; and, like all Samaritans, he abhorred the Jews.

Their temple of Gerizim, intended by Moses to be the centre of Israel, had ceased to exist since the time of King Hyrcanus; and that of Jerusalem drove them to frenzy as an outrage and a lasting injustice. Mannæus had made his way into it in order to sully the altar with dead men's bones. His confederates, less swift of foot than he, had been beheaded.

He saw it in the gap between two hills. Its white marble

walls and the golden lines of its roof shone resplendent in the sun. It was like a luminous mountain—something superhuman, crushing all else by its magnificence and its pride.

Then he extended his arms towards Zion; and, standing erect, with head thrown back and fists clenched, he hurled a malediction at it, believing that words had real power.

Antipas listened and did not seem shocked.

The Samaritan continued:

"At times he becomes excited, he longs to fly, he hopes for a rescue. At other times he has the tranquil aspect of a sick beast; or else I see him walking to and fro in the darkness, saying: 'What matters it? That He may grow great, I must needs shrink!'"

Antipas and Mannæus glanced at each other. But the Tetrarch was weary of reflection.

All those mountains about him, like terraces of huge petrified waves, the black ravines on the sides of the cliffs, the immensity of the blue vault, the brilliant glamour of the day, the depth of the abysses, disturbed him; and a wave of desolation swept over him at the spectacle of the desert, which, in the upheavals of its surface, formed amphitheatres and ruined palaces. The hot wind brought, with the odour of sulphur, an exhalation, as it were, from the accursed cities, buried lower than the banks beneath the heavy waters of the lake. These tokens of an immortal wrath brought dismay to his mind; and he stood, with both elbows on the balustrade, staring eyes, and his hands pressed against his temples. Some one touched him. He turned. Herodias stood before him.

A light purple robe covered her to the sandals. Having come forth hurriedly from her chamber, she wore neither necklace nor earrings; a tress of her black hair fell over one arm, and its end was lost to sight between her breasts. Her two open nostrils throbbed; a joyous expression of triumph lighted up her face; and in a loud voice, shaking the Tetrarch's arm, she said:

"Cæsar loves us! Agrippa is in prison!"

"Who told you so?"

"I know it."

She added:

"It is for having aspired to Caius's* empire!"

While living on their alms, he had schemed to obtain the title of king, which they, like him, coveted. But in the future no more fear! "Tiberius's dungeons are hard to open, and sometimes life is not secure therein!"

Antipas understood her; and, although she was Agrippa's sister, her atrocious purpose seemed to him justified. Such murders were a consequence of the state of affairs, a fatality attached to royal families. In Herod's they had become too numerous to count.

Then she set forth her plan: clients bought, letters discovered, spies at every door; and how she had succeeded in seducing Eutyches the denouncer. "Nothing deterred me! Have I not done even more for you? I have abandoned my daughter!"

After her divorce she had left the child in Rome, hoping to have others by the Tetrarch. She never mentioned her. He wondered why that outburst of affection.

The tent had been spread, and huge cushions were speedily brought to them. Herodias sank upon them and wept, turning her head to him. Then she passed her hand over her eyes, said that she proposed to think no more about it, that she was happy; and she recalled to his mind their chats yonder in the atrium, their meetings at the baths, their strolls along the Via Sacra, and the evenings at the great villas, amid the plashing of fountains, beneath arches of flowers, by the Roman Campagna. She gazed at him as of yore, rubbing against his breast, with cajoling gestures. He pushed her away. The love that she tried to kindle was so far away now! And all his misfortunes had flowed from it; for war had raged well-nigh twelve years. It had aged the Tetrarch. His shoulders were bent; in his sad-coloured toga with a violet border, his white hair blended with his beard, and the sun, shining through the veil, bathed with light his troubled brow. Herodias's too was wrinkled; and, seated face to face, they eyed each other fiercely.

The roads over the mountain began to be peopled. Herds-

* The Emperor Caligula.—[Trans.]

men drove their cattle, children dragged donkeys along, grooms led horses. Those who descended the heights above Machærus disappeared behind the castle; others ascended the ravine opposite, and, having reached the town, discharged their burdens in the courtyards. They were the Tetrarch's purveyors, and servants preceding his guests.

But, at the foot of the terrace, on the left, an Essene appeared, in a white robe, barefooted, with a stoical air. Mannaëus, on the right, rushed forward, brandishing his cutlass.

"Kill him!" cried Herodias.

"Hold!" said the Tetrarch.

He stood still; the other did likewise.

Then they withdrew, each by a different stairway, walking backward, keeping their eyes fixed on each other.

"I know him!" said Herodias; "his name is Phanuel, and he seeks speech with Iaokanann, since you are blind enough to spare his life!"

Antipas suggested that he might some day be of use. His attacks upon Jerusalem would win to their side the rest of the Jews.

"No!" she said; "they accept all masters and are not capable of forming a fatherland!" As for him who stirred the people with hopes never lost since the days of Nehemiah, the best policy was to suppress him.

There was no need of haste in the Tetrarch's opinion. Iaokanann dangerous! Folly! he feigned to laugh at the idea.

"Hold your peace!" And she repeated the tale of her humiliation one day when she was going towards Gilead to gather balsam. People were putting on their clothes on the bank of a stream. On a low hill near by a man was speaking. He had a camel's skin about his loins, and his head resembled a lion's. "As soon as he saw me he spit out at me all the maledictions of the prophets. His eyes shot fire; his voice roared; he raised his arms as if to tear the thunder from on high. Impossible to fly! the wheels of my chariot were buried in sand to the axles; and I drove away slowly, sheltering myself beneath my cloak, my blood

congealed by those insults, which fell like a shower of rain."

laokanann made life impossible to her. When he was taken and bound with cords, the soldiers were ordered to stab him if he resisted; he was as gentle as a lamb. They had put serpents in his dungeon; they were dead.

The futility of these tricks drove Herodias mad. Besides, what was the cause of his war against her? What interest guided him? His harangues, delivered to crowds, were circulated, spread abroad; she heard them everywhere, they filled the air. Against legions she would have been stout of heart. But that power, more harmful than the sword, and intangible, was stupefying, and she paced the terrace, livid with wrath, lacking words to express the passion that suffocated her.

She reflected, too, that the Tetrarch, yielding to public opinion, would perhaps deem it best to cast her off. In that case all would be lost! From childhood she had cherished the dream of mighty empire. It was to attain it that, deserting her first husband, she had allied herself to this one, who, she thought, had deceived her.

"I obtained a powerful support when I entered your family!"

"It is equal to yours!" rejoined the Tetrarch, simply.

Herodias felt the blood of the priests and kings who were her ancestors boiling in her veins.

"But your grandfather swept the temple of Ascalon! The others were shepherds, bandits, heads of caravans, a wandering horde, subject to Judah from the time of King David! All my ancestors vanquished yours! The first of the Maccabees drove you forth from Hebron; Hyrcanus forced you to be circumcised!" And, giving vent to the patrician's scorn for the plebeian, Jacob's hatred of Edom,* she reproached him for his indifference to insults, for his mildness towards the Phœnecians, who betrayed him, his cowardly subservience to the people, who detested him. "You are like them, admit it! And you sigh for the Arab girl who danced around the stones! Take her! Go, live with her, in her canvas house! Feed on her bread cooked

* Esau — [Trans.]

in the ashes; drink the curdled milk of her sheep! kiss her blue cheeks! and forget me!"

The Tetrarch was no longer listening. He was gazing at the roof of a house, on which there was a young girl, and an old woman holding a parasol with a reed handle as long as a fisher's line. In the centre of the rug stood a great travelling-basket, open. Girdles, veils, jewels overflowed from it in a confused mass. Now and again the girl stooped towards those objects and shook them in the air. She was dressed like the Roman women, in a wrinkled tunic, with a peplum adorned with emerald tassels; and blue bands confined her hair, which was doubtless too heavy, for from time to time she put her hand to it. The shadow of the parasol hovered above her, half hiding her. Twice or thrice Antipas caught a glimpse of her shapely neck, the corner of an ear, or of a tiny mouth. But he saw her whole figure, from the hips to the neck, as she bent forward and drew herself up again with supple grace. He watched for the repetition of that movement, and his breath came faster; flames kindled in his eyes. Herodias observed him.

He asked: "Who is she?"

She answered that she had no knowledge, and left him, suddenly appeased.

The Tetrarch was awaited under the porticoes by the Galileans, the master of the writings, the chief of the pasturage, the director of the salt-wells, and a Jew of Babylon, in command of his horsemen. All hailed him with loud acclamations. Then he vanished towards the inner chambers.

Phanuel appeared at the angle of a passage.

"Ah, again? You came to see Iaokanann doubtless?"

"And you! I have to tell you something of moment."

And, following Antipas, he entered, at his heels, a dark apartment.

The light entered through a barred opening that extended along the wall under the cornice. The walls were painted a dark pomegranate colour, almost black. At the end stood an ebony bed, with cords of ox-hide. A golden buckler, above, gleamed like a sun.

Antipas walked the whole length of the room, and lay down on the bed.

Phanuel was standing. He raised his arm, and said in the attitude of one inspired:

"The Most High sends one of his sons to earth now and again. Iaokanann is such an one. If you oppress him you will be punished."

"It is he who persecutes me!" cried Antipas. "He demanded of me an impossible act. Since then he has rent me. And I was not harsh at the beginning! He has even sent forth from Machærus men who overturn my provinces. A curse upon his life! Since he attacks me, I defend myself!"

"His fits of anger are too violent," replied Phanuel. "No matter! He must be set free."

"One does not set free raging beasts!" said the Tetrarch.

"Have no fear," the Essene replied. "He will go hence to the Arabs, the Gauls, the Scythians. His work is destined to reach to the ends of the earth!"

Antipas seemed lost in a vision.

"His power is mighty! Against my will, I love him."

"Then let him be free!"

The Tetrarch shook his head. He feared Herodias, Mannæus, and the unknown.

Phanuel strove to persuade him, alleging as a guaranty of his plans the submission of the Essenes to the King. People respected those poor men, unconquerable by torture, always clad in flax, and able to read the future in the stars.

Antipas recalled the words he had let fall a moment before.

"What is this thing which you said was of moment?"

A negro appeared. His body was white with dust. He gasped for breath and could only say:

"Vitellius!"

"What! has he arrived?"

"I saw him. Within three hours he will be here!"

The portières at the doors of the corridors were separated as by the wind. A busy hum filled the castle, a tumult of people running to and fro, of furniture being dragged about, of silver plate falling to the floor; and from the towers trumpets sounded, to call the scattered slaves.

II

THE ramparts were thronged with people when Vitellius entered the courtyard. He was leaning on his interpreter's arm, followed by a great red litter adorned with plumes and mirrors; he wore the toga, the laticlave, the buskins of a consul, and his person was surrounded by lictors.

They leaned against the door their twelve fasces—staves bound together by a strap, with an axe in the centre. Thereupon one and all trembled before the majesty of the Roman people.

The litter, borne by eight men, stopped. Then stepped forth a youth with a fat paunch, a blotched face, and pearls along his fingers. He was offered a glass of wine and spices. He drank it and demanded a second.

The Tetrarch had fallen at the Proconsul's feet, grieved, he said, that he had not been sooner informed of the favour of his presence. Otherwise he would have ordered that whatever the Vitellii might require should await them along the roads. They were descended from the goddess Vitellia. A road leading from Janiculum to the sea still bore their name. Quæstorships and consulships were innumerable in the family; and as for Lucius, now his guest, they owed thanks to him as the conqueror of the Cliti and as the father of the young Aulus,* who seemed to be returning to his own domain, since the Orient was the fatherland of the gods.

These hyperbolical compliments were delivered in Latin. Vitellius accepted them impassively.

He replied that the great Herod sufficed to make a nation glorious. The Athenians had entrusted to him the management of the Olympic games. He had built temples in honour of Augustus, had been patient, ingenious, awe-inspiring, and always loyal to the Cæsars.

Between the pillars, with their brazen capitals, Herodias was seen, advancing with the air of an empress, amid women and eunuchs carrying burning perfumes on silver-gilt salvers.

*Afterwards the Emperor Vitellius.—[Trans.]

The Proconsul took three steps to meet her; and, having saluted him with an inclination of the head:

"What joy!" she cried; "henceforth, Agrippa, the enemy of Tiberius, is powerless to do harm!"

He knew nothing of the event; it seemed to him perilous; and as Antipas swore that he would do everything for the Emperor, Vitellius added: "Even to the injury of others?"

He had taken hostages from the King of the Parthians, and the Emperor had forgotten it; for Antipas, being present at the conference, to give himself importance, had instantly despatched the news. Hence a deep-rooted hatred, and delay in sending succour.

The Tetrarch stammered, but Aulus said, laughing:

"Fear not; I will protect you!"

The Proconsul pretended not to have heard. The father's fortune depended on the son's debasement; and that flower from the mire of Capræ procured him advantages so considerable that he encompassed it with attentions, distrusting it all the while because it was poisonous.

A tumult arose beneath the gate. A file of white mules was led in, ridden by persons in priestly costume. They were Sadducees and Pharisees, led to Machærus by the same object of ambition, the first wishing to obtain the honourable post of sacrificer, the others to retain it. Their faces were dark, especially those of the Pharisees, foes of Rome and of the Tetrarch. The skirts of their tunics embarrassed them in the press; and their tiaras rested insecurely on their brows, above bands of parchment, whereon words were written.

At almost the same time some soldiers of the vanguard arrived. They had placed their shields in bags, to protect them from the dust; and behind them was Marcellus, lieutenant to the Proconsul, with publicans carrying tablets of wood under their armpits.

Antipas named the principal persons of his suite: Tolmai, Kanthera, Sebon, Ammonius, of Alexandria, who bought asphalt for him, Naaman, captain of his velites, and Jacim the Babylonian.

Vitellius had observed Mannæus.

"Who is that man?"

The Tetrarch, with a gesture, gave him to understand that he was the executioner.

Then he presented the Sadducees.

Jonathas, a small man of free manners, speaking Greek, begged the master to honour them by a visit to Jerusalem. —He would probably go thither.

Eleazar, with hooked nose and long beard, demanded for the Pharisees the cloak of the high priest, detained in the Tower of Antonia by the civil authorities.

Then the Galileans denounced Pontius Pilate. Taking advantage of the art of a madman who was seeking David's vessel of gold in a cave near Samaria, he had killed some of the inhabitants. And they all spoke at once, Mannæus with more violence than the others. Vitellius declared that the criminals should be punished.

Loud exclamations arose in front of a portico where the soldiers had hung their shields. The coverings being removed, there was seen on the bosses the image of Cæsar. That, to the Jews, was idolatry. Antipas harangued them, while Vitellius, from an elevated seat on the colonnade, looked on in amazement at their wrath. Tiberius had done well to banish four hundred of them to Sardinia. But at home they were strong; and he ordered the bucklers to be removed.

Thereupon they surrounded the Proconsul, imploring reparation for injustice, privileges, alms. Clothes were torn, they trampled upon one another; and, to make room, slaves struck right and left with staves. Those nearest the gateway went down to the road; others ascended it; the tide flowed back; two currents met in that mass of men, which swayed back and forth, hemmed in by the encircling walls.

Vitellius asked why there were so many people. Antipas told him the reason: his birthday festival; and he pointed out several of his people, who leaned over the battlements, lowering enormous baskets of meat, fruit, vegetables, antelopes and storks, large sky-blue fish, grapes, melons, pomegranates arranged in pyramids. Aulus could not restrain

himself. He rushed towards the kitchen, impelled by that gluttony which was destined to surprise the universe.

Passing a cave, he saw stew-pans like cuirasses. Vitellius came to look at them, and demanded that the underground rooms of the fortress should be opened for him.

They were hewn in the rock, with high vaulted roofs, and pillars at intervals. The first contained old armour, but the second was filled to overflowing with pikes, all their points protruding from a bouquet of plumes. The third seemed to be hung with mats of reeds, the slender arrows were arranged so straightly side by side. Scimitar-blades covered the walls of the fourth. In the centre of the fifth, rows of helmets, with their crests, formed as it were a battalion of red serpents. In the sixth naught could be seen save quivers; in the seventh, naught but military boots; in the eighth, naught but armlets; in those following, pitch-forks, grappling-irons, ladders, ropes, and even poles for catapults, even bells for the breastplates of dromedaries! And as the mountain grew larger at its base, and was hollowed out within like a beehive, beneath these rooms there were others more numerous and deeper.

Vitellius, Phineas his interpreter, and Sisenna, the leader of the publicans, walked through them by the light of torches borne by three eunuchs.

In the shadow they distinguished hideous objects invented by the barbarians: head-crushers studded with nails, javelins that poisoned the wounds they made, pincers resembling a crocodile's jaws; in a word, the Tetrarch had in store in Machærus munitions of war for forty thousand men.

He had gathered them in anticipation of an alliance of his enemies. But the Proconsul might believe, or say, that it was to fight against the Romans, and the Tetrarch sought explanations.

They were not his; many were used for protection against brigands; moreover, they were needed against the Arabs; or else, they had all belonged to his father. And, instead of walking behind the Proconsul, he went before, at a rapid pace. Then he stood against the wall, which he covered with his toga, holding his elbows away from his sides;

but the top of a door appeared above his head. Vitellius noticed it and wished to know what was on the other side.

The Babylonian alone could open it.

"Call the Babylonian!"

They awaited his coming.

His father had come from the shores of the Euphrates, to offer his services to Herod the Great, with four hundred horsemen, to defend the eastern frontier. After the partition of the kingdom, Jacim had remained in Philip's service, and now served Antipas.

He appeared, with a bow over his shoulder, a whip in his hand. Cords of many colours were tied tightly about his crooked legs. His huge arms emerged from a sleeveless tunic, and a fur cap cast its shadow over his face, which bore a beard curled in rings.

At first he seemed not to understand the interpreter. But Vitellius cast a glance at Antipas, who instantly repeated his command. Thereupon Jacim placed both his hands against the door. It glided into the wall.

A breath of hot air came forth from the darkness. A winding path sloped downward; they followed it and reached the entrance to a grotto, of greater extent than the other underground apartments.

At the rear there was an arched opening over the precipice, which defended the citadel on that side. The blossoms of a honeysuckle that clung to the wall hung downward in the bright light of day. Along the ground trickled a murmuring thread of water.

There were white horses there, a hundred perhaps, eating barley from a board on a level with their mouths. All had their manes painted blue, their hoofs in bags of esparto, and the hair between the ears curled over the frontal bone, like a wig. With their very long tails they lazily lashed their legs. The Proconsul was struck dumb with admiration.

They were marvellous creatures, supple as serpents, light as birds. They would keep pace with their riders' arrows, overturn men and bite them in the abdomen, traverse the mountainous country with ease, leap ravines, and continue

their wild gallop over the level ground through a whole day. A word would stop them. As soon as Jacim entered, they went to him, like sheep when the shepherd appears, and, stretching out their necks, gazed at him restlessly with their childlike eyes. From habit, he uttered a hoarse cry from the bottom of his throat, which aroused their spirits; and they reared, hungry for space, begging leave to run.

Antipas, fearing that Vitellius might take them, had imprisoned them in that place, specially designed for animals in case of siege.

"It is a bad stable," said the Proconsul, "and you run the risk of losing them! Count them, Sisenna!"

The publican took a tablet from his girdle, counted the horses and wrote the number.

The agents of the fiscal companies bribed the provincial governors, in order to pillage the provinces. This one smelt everywhere, with his polecat's jaw and his blinking eyes.

At last they went up again to the courtyard.

Bronze shields, set in the pavement here and there, covered the cisterns. He noticed one larger than the rest, which had not their sonority beneath the feet. He struck them all in turn, then shouted, stamping:

"I have it! I have it! Herod's treasure is here!"

The search for his treasure was a mania among the Romans.

It did not exist, the Tetrarch swore.

But what was there beneath?

"Nothing! a man, a prisoner."

"Show him to me!" said Vitellius.

The Tetrarch did not obey; the Jews would have learned his secret. His disinclination to raise the shield angered Vitellius.

"Break it in!" he shouted to the lictors.

Mannæus had divined what was happening. Seeing an axe, he thought that they were going to behead Iaokanann—and he stopped the lictor at the first blow on the bronze circle, inserted a sort of hook between it and the pavement, then, straightening his long, thin arms, slowly raised

it; it opened, and all marvelled at the old man's strength. Beneath the wood-lined cover was a trapdoor of the same dimensions. At a blow of the fist it folded in two panels; then they saw a hole, a great ditch, surrounded by a staircase without a rail; and they who leaned over the brink saw at the bottom something indistinct and horrifying.

A human being lay on the ground, covered with long hair that mingled with the beast's hair that clothed his back. He rose; his brow touched a horizontal grating; and from time to time he disappeared in the depths of his den.

The sun gleamed on the points of the tiaras and on the sword-hilts, and heated the flagstones beyond measure; and doves, flying from the eaves, fluttered above the courtyard. It was the hour when Mannæus usually threw grain to them. He crouched before the Tetrarch, who stood beside Vitellius. The Galileans, the priests, the soldiers, formed a circle behind them; all held their peace, in agonising suspense as to what was about to happen.

First there was a profound sigh, uttered in a cavernous voice.

Herodias heard it at the other end of the palace. Overcome by a sort of fascination, she passed through the crowd; and with one hand on Mannæus's shoulder, and body bent forward, she listened.

The voice arose.

"Woe to you, Pharisees and Sadducees, generation of vipers, inflated skins, tinkling cymbals!"

They recognized Iaokanann. His name passed from mouth to mouth. Others hastened to the spot.

"Woe unto you, O people! woe to the traitors of Judah, to the drunkards of Ephraim, to those who dwell in the fat valleys and who are overcome with wine!"

"Let them fade away like the water that flows, like the snail that melts as it crawls, like the fœtus of a woman who does not see the sun.

"Thou must take refuge, O Moab, among the cypresses like the sparrows, in caverns like the jerboa. The gates of the fortresses shall be rent asunder more easily than nut-

shells, walls shall crumble, cities shall burn; and the scourge of the Eternal shall not rest. He shall turn your limbs about in your blood as wool is turned in the dyer's vat. He shall tear you like a new harrow; He shall scatter morsels of your flesh upon the mountains!"

Of what conqueror was he speaking? Was it of Vitellius? The Romans alone could effect such an extermination. Complaints arose:

"Enough! enough! let him finish!"

He continued, in a louder voice:

"Beside their mothers' dead bodies, little children shall drag themselves through the dust. You shall go at night to seek bread among the ruins, at the risk of sword thrusts. The jackals shall fight for your bones on the public squares, where the old men used to talk at evening. Your virgins, swallowing their tears, shall play the lute at the stranger's feasts, and your bravest sons shall bend their backs, crushed by too heavy burdens!"

The people remembered their days of exile, all the calamities of their history. These were the words of the prophets of old. Iaokanann sent them forth, like mighty blows, one after another.

But the voice became sweet, melodious, musical. It proclaimed enfranchisement, splendid portents in the sky, the newly born, with an arm in the dragon's cavern, gold instead of clay, the desert blooming like a rose. "That which is now worthy sixty talents will not cost an obol. Fountains of milk shall gush from the rocks; you shall sleep in the wine-presses, with full bellies!—When wilt Thou come, whose coming I await? In anticipation, all the peoples kneel, and Thy sway shall be eternal, O Son of David!"

The Tetrarch threw himself back, the existence of a Son of David affronting him like a threat.

Iaokanann anathematised him for his assumption of royalty:—"There is no king save the Eternal!"—and for his gardens, his statues, his ivory furniture—like the impious Ahab!

Antipas broke the cord of the seal that hung upon his

breast, and threw it into the hole, bidding him hold his peace.

The voice replied:

"I will cry aloud like the bear, like a wild ass, like a woman in labour!

"The punishment has already befallen thee in thy incest. God afflicts thee with the sterility of the mule."

And laughter arose, like the plashing of the waves.

Vitellius persisted in remaining. The interpreter, in an unmoved voice, repeated in the Roman tongue all the invectives that Iakannan roared in his own. The Tetrarch and Herodias were forced to listen to them twice. He panted, while she, open-mouthed, watched the bottom of the hole.

The ghastly man threw back his head, and, grasping the bars, pressed against them his face, which had the aspect of a tangled underbrush, and in which two coals of fire beamed.

"Ah! it is thou, Jezebel!

"Thou dost take his heart captive with the creaking of thy shoes. Thou didst neigh like a mare. Thou didst set thy bed on the mountains, to accomplish thy sacrifices!

"The Lord shall tear away thine earrings, thy purple robes, thy veils of fine linen, the circlets from thine arms, the rings from thy feet; and the little golden crescents that tremble on thy brow, thy silver mirrors, thy fans of ostrich feathers, the mother-of-pearl pattens that increase thy stature, the pride of thy diamonds, the perfumes of thy hair, the painting of thy nails—all the artifices of sensuality; and the stones shall be too few to stone the adulteress!"

She glanced about her for protection. The Pharisees hypocritically lowered their eyes. The Sadducees turned their faces away, fearing to offend the Proconsul. Antipas seemed at the point of death.

The voice grew louder, took on new intonations, rolled hither and thither with a crashing as of thunder, and, repeated by the mountain echoes, struck Machærus with bolt after bolt.

"Stretch thyself in the dust, daughter of Babylon! Grind flour! Remove thy girdle, unloose thy shoes, truss up thy

skirts, cross the rivers! Thy shame shall be laid bare, thine approbrium shall be seen! thy sobs shall break thy teeth! The Eternal abhors the stench of thy crimes! Accursed! accursed! Die like a dog!"

The trap-door closed, the cover was lowered to its place. Mannæus wished to strangle Iaokanann.

Herodias vanished. The Pharisees were scandalised. Antipas, in their midst, defended himself.

"Doubtless," said Eleazar, "one may marry his brother's wife; but Herodias was not widowed, and, moreover, she had a child, wherein lay the abomination."

"Not so! not so!" objected Jonathas the Sadducee. "The Law condemns such marriages, without proscribing them absolutely."

"It matters not! They are most unjust to me!" said Antipas; "for Absalom lay with his father's wives, Judah with his daughter-in-law, Ammon with his sister, Lot with his daughters."

Aulus, who had been sleeping, reappeared at that moment. When he was informed of the affair, he took sides with the Tetrarch. He should not be disturbed by such foolish ideas; and he laughed aloud at the reprobation of the priests and the frenzy of Iaokanann.

Herodias, on the steps, turned towards him.

"You are wrong, my master! He bids the people refuse to pay the tax."

"Is that true?" instantly asked the publican.

The answers were generally in the affirmative. The Tetrarch confirmed them.

Vitellius thought the prisoner might fly; and, as Antipas's conduct seemed to him equivocal, he posted sentinels at the gates, along the walls, and in the courtyard.

Then he went to his apartment. The deputations of priests attended him.

Each one set forth his grievances, without broaching the question of the office of sacrificer.

One and all importuned him. He dismissed them.

Jonathas left him when he saw on the battlements Antipas

talking with a man with long hair and in a white robe—an Essene; and he regretted having upheld him.

One thought afforded the Tetrarch consolation. Iaokannan was no longer at his disposal, the Romans had taken charge of him. What a relief! Phaniel was walking on the path around the battlements. He called him and said, pointing to the soldiers:

“They are stronger than I! I cannot set him free; it is not my fault!”

The courtyard was empty. The slaves were at rest. Against the reddening sky, flame-coloured on the horizon, the smallest perpendicular objects were outlined in black. Antipas distinguished the salt-wells at the far end of the Dead Sea, and he no longer saw the tents of the Arabs. Doubtless they had gone. The moon rose; a feeling of peace descended upon his heart.

Phaniel, overwhelmed, stood with his chin upon his breast. At last he made known what he had to say.

Since the beginning of the month he had studied the sky before dawn, the constellation Perseus being at the zenith. Agalah was hardly visible, Algol shone less brightly, Mira-Cœti had disappeared, whence he augured the death of a man of mark, that very night, in Machærus.

Who? Vitellius was too well guarded. Iaokannan would not be executed. “Then it is I!” thought the Tetrarch.

Perhaps the Arabs would return. The Proconsul might discover his relations with the Parthians! Hired assassins from Jerusalem escorted the priests; they had daggers under their garments, and the Tetrarch did not doubt Phaniel’s learning.

He conceived the idea of having recourse to Herodias. He hated her, however. But she would give him courage, and all the bonds were not broken of the spell she had formerly cast upon him.

When he entered her chamber, cinnamon was smouldering in a bowl of porphyry; and powders, unguents, fabrics like clouds, embroideries lighter than feathers, were scattered about.

He did not mention Phaniel’s prediction, or his dread of

the Jews and Arabs; she would have accused him of cowardice. He spoke of the Romans only. Vitellius had confided to him none of his military projects. He supposed him to be a friend of Caius, with whom Agrippa consorted, and he would be sent into exile, or perhaps he would be murdered.

Herodias, with indulgent contempt, tried to encourage him. At last she took from a small casket a curious medalion adorned with Tiberius's profile. That was enough to make the lictors turn pale and to base accusations upon.

Antipas, touched with gratitude, asked her how she had obtained it.

"It was given me," she replied.

Beneath a portière opposite, a bare arm protruded, a lovely, youthful arm, that might have been carved in ivory by Polycletus. Somewhat awkwardly, and yet with grace, it felt about in the air, trying to grasp a tunic left upon a stool near the wall.

An old woman silently passed it to her, pulling aside the curtain.

The Tetrarch remembered the face, but could not place it.

"Is that slave yours?"

"What matters it to you?" replied Herodias.

III

THE guests filled the banquet-hall.

It had three naves, like a basilica, separated by pillars of algum wood, with bronze capitals covered with carvings. Two galleries with openwork balustrades overhung it; and a third, in gold filagree, jutted out at one end, opposite an immense arch.

Candelabra burning on long tables extending the whole length of the hall formed bushes of fire, between cups of painted clay and copper platters, cubes of snow and heaps of grapes; but those red gleams one after another were lost in space because of the height of the ceiling, and points of light twinkled, like the stars at night, through the branches.

Through the opening of the vast arch, one could see torches on the terraces of the houses; for Antipas feasted his friends, his subjects, and all who had presented themselves.

Slaves, as active as dogs, and with their feet encased in sandals of felt, went to and fro, carrying salvers.

The proconsular table stood upon a platform built of sycamore boards, beneath the gilded tribune. Tapestries from Babylon enclosed it in a sort of pavilion.

Three ivory couches, one opposite the door and one on either side, held Vitellius, his son, and Antipas; the Proconsul being next the door, at the left, Aulus at the right, the Tetrarch in the centre.

He wore a heavy black cloak, whose texture was invisible beneath layers of dye-stuffs; he had paint on his cheek-bones, his beard trimmed like a fan, and azure powder on his hair, surmounted by a diadem of precious stones. Vitellius retained his purple baldric, which he wore diagonally over a linen tunic. Aulus had the sleeves of his robe of violet silk, shot with silver, tied at his back. The long spiral curls of his hair formed terraces, and a necklace of sapphires sparkled on his breast, which was as plump and white as a woman's. Beside him, on a mat, with legs crossed, sat a very beautiful boy, who smiled incessantly. He had seen him in the kitchen, could not live without him, and having difficulty in remembering his Chaldean name, called him simply the "Asiatic." From time to time he stretched himself out on the triclinium. Then his bare feet overlooked the assemblage.

On one side there were the priests and officers of Antipas, people from Jerusalem, the chief men of the Greek cities; and, under the Proconsul, Marcellus with the publicans, friends of the Tetrarch, the notables of Cana, Ptolemais, and Jericho; then, mingled pell-mell, mountaineers from Libanus and Herod's old soldiers (twelve Thracians, a Gaul, two Germans), gazelle-hunters, Idumean shepherds, the Sultan of Palmyra, seamen of Eziongeber. Each person had before him a cake of soft dough, on which to wipe his fingers; and their arms, stretching out like vultures' necks, seized olives, pistachioes, and almonds. All the faces beamed with joy beneath crowns of flowers.

The Pharisees had spurned them as Roman wantonness. They shuddered when they were sprinkled with *galburnum* and incense, a compound reserved for the use of the Temple.

Aulus rubbed his armpits with it; and Antipas promised him a whole cargo, with three bales of that genuine balsam which caused Cleopatra to covet Palestine.

A captain of his garrison at Tiberias, recently arrived, took his place behind him, to tell him of extraordinary events. But his attention was divided between the Proconsul and what was being said at the neighbouring tables.

The talk was of Iaokanann and men of his type; Simon of Gittoy purged sin with fire. A certain Jesus——

"The worst of all!" cried Eleazer. "An infamous juggler!"

Behind the Tetrarch a man arose, as pale as the hem of his *chlamys*. He descended from the platform and addressed the Pharisees:

"False! Jesus does miracles!"

Antipas would fain see one.

"You should have brought Him hither! Tell us."

Then he told that he, Jacob, having a daughter who was sick, had betaken himself to Capernaum, to implore the Master to heal her. The master had replied: "Return to thy home, she is healed!"—and he had found her in the doorway, having left her bed when the hand of the dial marked three o'clock, the very moment when he had accosted Jesus.

Of course, argued the Pharisees, there are devices, powerful herbs! Sometimes, even there, at Machærus, one found the *baaras*, which made men invulnerable; but to cure without seeing or touching was an impossibility, unless Jesus employed demons.

And the friends of Antipas, the chief men of Galilee, repeated, shaking their heads:

"Demons, clearly."

Jacob, standing between their table and that of the priests, held his peace, with a haughty yet gentle bearing.

They called upon him to speak:—"Explain His power."

He bent his shoulders, and in an undertone, slowly, as if afraid of himself:

"Know you not that He is the Messiah?"

All the priests glanced at one another, and Vitellius inquired the meaning of the word. His interpreter waited a full minute before replying.

They called by that name a liberator who should bring to them the enjoyment of all their goods and power over all peoples. Some indeed maintained that two should be expected. The first would be vanquished by Gog and Magog, demons of the North; but the other would exterminate the Prince of Evil; and for ages they had expected His coming every minute.

The priests having taken counsel together, Eleazar spoke for them.

First, the Messiah would be a Son of David, not of a carpenter. He would confirm the Law; this Nazarene assailed it; and—a yet stronger argument—he was to be preceded by the coming of Elias.

Jacob retorted:

"But Elias has come!"

"Elias! Elias!" echoed the multitude, even to the farthest end of the hall.

All, in imagination, saw an old man beneath a flock of ravens, the lightning shining upon an altar, idolatrous pontiffs cast into raging torrents; and the women in the tribunes, thought of the widow of Zarephath.

Jacob wearied himself repeating that he knew him! He had seen him! And so had the people!

"His name?"

Whereupon he shouted with all his strength:

"*Taokanann!*"

Antipas fell backward as if stricken full in the chest. The Sadducees leaped upon Jacob. Eleazar harangued, seeking to obtain an audience.

When silence was restored, he folded his cloak about him and propounded questions, like a judge.

"Since the prophet is dead——"

Murmurs interrupted him. It was believed that Elias had disappeared only.

He angrily rebuked the multitude, and asked, continuing his inquiry:

"Think you that he has come to life again?"

"Why not?" said Jacob.

The Sadducees shrugged their shoulders; Jonathas, half closing his little eyes, forced himself to laugh, like a clown. Nothing could be more absurd than the claim of the body to life everlasting; and he declaimed, for the Proconsul's benefit, this line from a contemporary poet:

Nec crescit, nec post mortem durare videtur.

But Aulus was leaning over the edge of the triclinium, his forehead bathed in sweat, green of face, his hands on his stomach.

The Sadducees feigned deep emotion—on the morrow the office of sacrificer was restored to them; Antipas made parade of despair; Vitellius remained impassive. None the less his suffering was intense; with his son he would lose his fortune.

Aulus had not finished vomiting when he wished to eat again.

"Give me some marble-dust, schist from Naxos, seawater, no matter what! Suppose I should take a bath?"

He crunched snow; then, after hesitating between a Com-magene stew and pink blackbirds, he decided upon gourds with honey. The Asiatic stared at him, that faculty of absorbing food denoting a prodigious being of a superior race.

Bulls' kidneys were served, also dormice, nightingales, and minced-meat on vine leaves; and the priests disputed concerning the resurrection. Ammonius, pupil of Philo the Platonist, deemed them stupid, and said as much to Greeks who laughed at the oracles. Marcellus and Jacob had come together. The first described to the second the bliss he had felt during his baptism by Mithra, and Jacob urged him to follow Jesus. Wines made from the palm and the tamarisk, wines of Safed and of Byblos, flowed from amphoræ into crateres, from crateres into drinking-cups, from drinking-cups down thirsty throats. There was much talk, and hearts

overflowed. Jacim, although a Jew, did not conceal his adoration of the planets. A merchant of Aphaka stupefied the nomads by detailing the wonders of the Temple of Hierapolis: and they asked how much the pilgrimage would cost. Others clung to their native religion. A German, almost blind, sang a hymn in praise of that promontory of Scandinavia where the gods appeared with halos about their faces; and men from Sichem refused to eat turtle-doves, from respect for the dove Azima.

Many talked, standing in the centre of the hall, and the vapour of their breaths, with the smoke of the candles, made a fog in the air. Phanuel passed along the wall. He had been studying the firmament anew, but he did not approach the Tetrarch, dreading the drops of oil, which, to the Essenes, were a great pollution.

Blows rang out against the gate of the castle.

It was known now that Iaokanann was held a prisoner there. Men with torches ascended the path; a black mass swarmed in the ravine; and they roared from time to time:

"Iaokanann! Iaokanann!"

"He disturbs everything!" said Jonathas.

"We shall have no money left if he continues!" added the Pharisees.

And recriminations arose:

"Protect us!"

"Let us make an end of him!"

"You abandon the religion!"

"Impious as the Herods!"

"Less so than you!" retorted Antipas. "It was my father who built your temple!"

Thereupon the Pharisees, the sons of the proscribed, the partisans of the Mattathias, accused the Tetrarch of the crimes of his family.

They had pointed skulls, bristling beards, weak and evil hands, or flat noses, great round eyes, and the expression of a bulldog. A dozen or more, scribes and servants of the priests, fed upon the refuse of holocausts, rushed as far as the foot of the platform, and with knives threatened Antipas, who harangued them, while the Sadducees listlessly

defended him. He spied Mannæus and motioned him to go, Vitellius signifying by his expression that these things did not concern him.

The Pharisees, remaining on their triclinia, worked themselves into a demoniacal frenzy. They broke the dishes before them. They had been served with the favourite stew of Mæcenas—wild ass—unclean meat.

Aulus mocked at them on the subject of the ass's head, which they held in honour, it was said, and indulged in other sarcasms concerning their antipathy for pork. Doubtless it was because that vulgar beast had killed their Bacchus; and they were too fond of wine, since a golden vine had been discovered in the Temple.

The priests did not understand his words. Phineas, by birth a Galilæan, refused to translate them. Thereupon Aulus's wrath knew no bounds, the more as the Asiatic, seized with fright, has disappeared; and the repast failed to please him, the dishes being commonplace, not sufficiently disguised! He became calmer when he saw tails of Syrian sheep, which are bundles of fat.

The character of the Jews seemed hideous to Vitellius. Their god might well be Moloch, whose altars he had noticed along the road; and the sacrifices of children recurred to his mind, with the story of the man whom they were mysteriously fattening. His Latin heart rose in disgust at their intolerance, their iconoclastic frenzy, their brutish stagnation. The Proconsul wished to go, Aulus refused.

His robe fallen to his hips, he lay behind a heap of food, too replete to take more, but persisting in not leaving it.

The excitement of the people increased. They abandoned themselves to schemes of independence. They recalled the glory of Israel. All the conquerors had been punished: Antigonus, Crassus, Varus.

"Villains!" exclaimed the Proconsul; for he understood Syriac; his interpreter simply gave him time to compose his replies.

Antipas quickly drew the medallion of the Emperor, and, watching him tremblingly, held it with the image towards him.

Suddenly the panels of the golden tribune opened, and in the brilliant blaze of candles, between her slaves and festoons of anemone, Herodias appeared—on her head an Assyrian mitre held in place on her brow by a chin-piece; her hair fell in spiral curls over a scarlet peplum, slit along the sleeves. With two stone monsters, like those that guard the treasure of the Atrides, standing against the door, she resembled Cybele flanked by her lions; and from the balustrade above Antipas, she cried, *patera* in hand:

"Long life to Cæsar!"

This homage was echoed by Vitellius, Antipas, and the priests.

But there came to them from the lower end of the hall a hum of surprise and admiration. A young girl had entered.

Beneath a bluish veil that concealed her breast and her head could be seen her arched eyebrows, the sards at her ears, the whiteness of her skin. A square of variegated silk covered her shoulders and was secured about her hips by a golden girdle. Her black drawers were embroidered with mandrakes, and she tapped the floor indolently with tiny slippers of humming-birds' feathers.

When she reached the platform, she removed her veil. It was Herodias, as she was in her youth. Then she began to dance.

Her feet passed, one before the other, to the music of a flute and a pair of crotala. Her rounded arms seemed to beckon some one, who always fled. She pursued him, lighter than a butterfly, like an inquisitive Psyche, like a wandering soul, and seemed on the point of flying away.

The funereal notes of the *gingras* succeeded the crotala. Prostration had followed hope. Her attitudes signified sighs, and her whole person a languor so intense that one knew not whether she was weeping for a god or dying of joy in his embrace. Her eyes half closed, she writhed and swayed with billowy undulations of the stomach; her bosoms quivered, her face remained impassive, and her feet did not stop.

Vitellius compared her to Mnester the pantomimist. Aulus was vomiting again. The Tetrarch lost himself in a dream and thought no more of Herodias. He fancied that he saw

her near the Sadducees. Then the vision faded away.

It was not a vision. She had sent messengers, far from Machærus, to Salome her daughter, whom the Tetrarch loved; and it was an excellent scheme. She was sure of him now!

Then it was the frenzy of love that demanded to be satisfied. She danced like the priestesses of the Indies, like the Nubian girls of the Cataracts, like the Bacchantes of Lydia. She threw herself in all directions, like a flower beaten by the storm. The jewels in her ears leaped about, the silk on her back shone with a changing gleam; from her arms, from her feet, from her garments invisible sparks flashed and set men aflame. A harp sang; the multitude replied with loud applause. By stretching her legs apart, without bending her knees, she stooped so low that her chin touched the floor; and the nomads, accustomed to abstinence, the Roman soldiers, experts in debauchery, the miserly publicans, the old priests soured by disputes, all, distending their nostrils, quivered with desire.

Then she danced about Antipas's table, in a frenzy of excitement, like a witch's rhombus; and in a voice broken by sobs of lust he said: "Come! come!" She danced on; the dulcimers rang out as if they would burst; the crowd roared. But the Tetrarch shouted louder than them all: "Come! come! thou shalt have Capernaum! the plain of Tiberias! my citadels! half of my kingdom!"

She threw herself on her hands, heels in the air, and thus circled the platform like a huge scarab, then stopped abruptly.

Her neck and her vertebræ were at right angles. The coloured skirts that enveloped her legs, falling over her shoulders like a rainbow, framed her face a cubit from the floor. Her lips were painted, her eyebrows intensely black, her eyes almost terrible, and drops of sweat on her forehead resembled steam on white marble.

She did not speak. They gazed at each other.

There was a snapping of fingers in the tribune. She went thither, reappeared, and, lisping a little, uttered these words with an infantine air:

"I want you to give me, on a charger, the head——" She

had forgotten the name, but she continued with a smile: "The head of Iaokanann!"

The Tetrarch sank back, overwhelmed.

He was bound by his word, and the people were waiting. But the death that had been predicted to him, should it befall another, might avert his own. If Iaokanann were really Elias, he could escape it; if he were not, the murder would be of no importance.

Mannæus was at his side and understood his purpose.

Vitellius recalled him to give him the countersign of the sentinels guarding the moat.

It was a relief. In a moment all would be over.

But Mannæus was hardly prompt in the execution of his functions.

He reappeared, but greatly perturbed.

For forty years he had filled the post of executioner. He it was who had drowned Aristobulus, strangled Alexander, burned Mattathias alive, beheaded Zosimus, Pappus, Josephus and Antipates, and he dared not kill Iaokanann! His teeth chattered, his whole body trembled.

He had seen in front of the hole the Great Angel of the Samaritans, all covered with eyes, and brandishing an enormous sword, red and jagged like a flame. Two soldiers brought forward as witnesses could confirm him.

They had seen nothing save a Jewish captain, who had rushed upon them and who had ceased to live.

The frantic rage of Herodias burst forth in a torrent of vulgar and murderous abuse. She broke her nails on the gilded grating of the tribune, and the two carved lions seemed to bite at her shoulders and to roar with her.

Antipas imitated her, so did the priests, the soldiers, the Pharisees, all demanding vengeance; and others indignant that their pleasure was delayed.

Mannæus went forth, hiding his face.

The guests found the time of waiting even longer than before. They were bored.

Suddenly the sound of footsteps echoed in the corridors. The suspense became intolerable.

The head entered; and Mannæus held it by the hair, at arm's length, proud of the applause.

When he laid it on a charger, he offered it to Salome. She ran lightly up to the tribune; some moments later the head was brought back by the same old woman whom the Tetrarch had noticed that morning on the roof of a house, and later in Herodias's chamber.

He recoiled to avoid looking at it. Vitellius cast an indifferent glance upon it.

Mannæus went down from the platform and exhibited it to the Roman captains, then to all those who were eating in that part of the hall.

They examined it.

The sharp blade of the instrument, cutting downward, had touched the jaw. The corners of the mouth were drawn convulsively. Blood, already clotted, studded the beard. The closed eyelids were of a leaden hue, like shells; and the candelabra all about shone upon it.

It reached the priests' table. A Pharisee turned it over curiously, and Mannæus, having turned it back again, placed it in front of Aulus, who was awakened by it. Through their partly open lids the dead eyes and the lifeless eyes seemed to speak to each other.

Then Mannæus presented it to Antipas. Tears flowed down the Tetrarch's cheeks.

The torches were extinguished. The guests took their leave, and Antipas alone remained in the hall, his hands pressed against his temples, still gazing at the severed head; while Phanuel, standing in the centre of the great nave, muttered prayers with outstretched arms.

At the moment when the sun rose, two men, previously despatched by Iaokanann, returned with the long-awaited answer.

They confided it to Phanuel, who was enraptured by it.

Then he showed them the sorrowful object on the charger, amidst the remnants of the feast. One of the men said to him:

"Be comforted! He has gone down among the dead to announce the Christ's coming!"

The Essene understood now the words: "That He may grow great, I must needs shrink."

And all three, having taken the head of Iaokanann, went forth in the direction of Galilee.

As it was very heavy, they carried it each in turn.

1876

THE ATTACK ON THE MILL

(L'Attaque du Moulin)

By ÉMILE ZOLA

I

IT was high holiday at Father Merlier's mill on that pleasant summer afternoon. Three tables had been brought out into the garden and placed end to end in the shadow of the great elm, and now they were awaiting the arrival of the guests. It was known throughout the length and breadth of the land that that day was to witness the betrothal of old Merlier's daughter, François, to Dominique, a young man who was said to be not overfond of work, but whom never a woman for three leagues of the country around could look at without sparkling eyes, such a well-favoured young fellow was he.

That mill of Father Merlier's was truly a very pleasant spot. It was situated right in the heart of Rocreuse, at the place where the main road makes a sharp bend. The village has but a single street, bordered on either side by a row of low, whitened cottages, but just there where the road curves, there are broad stretches of meadow-land, and huge trees, which follow the course of the Morelle, cover the low grounds of the valley with a most delicious shade. All Lorraine has no more charming bit of nature to show. To right and left dense forests, great monarchs of the wood, centuries old, rise from the gentle slopes and fill the horizon with a sea of verdure, while away towards the south extends the plain, of wondrous fertility and checkered almost to infinity with its small enclosures, divided off from one another by

their live hedges. But what makes the crowning glory of Rocreuse is the coolness of this verdurous nook, even in the hottest days of July and August. The Morelle comes down from the woods of Gagny, and it would seem as if it gathered to itself on the way all the delicious freshness of the foliage beneath which it glides for many a league; it brings down with it the murmuring sounds, the glacial, solemn shadows of the forest. And that is not the only source of coolness; there are running waters of all kinds singing among the copses; one cannot take a step without coming on a gushing spring, and as she makes his way along the narrow paths he seems to be treading above subterranean lakes that seek the air and sunshine through the moss above and profit by every smallest crevice, at the roots of trees or among the chinks and crannies of the rocks, to burst forth in fountains of crystalline clearness. So numerous and so loud are the whispering voices of these streams that they silence the song of the bullfinches. It is as if one were in an enchanted park, with cascades falling on every side.

The meadows below are never athirst. The shadows beneath the gigantic chestnut trees are of inky blackness, and along the edges of the fields long rows of poplar stand like walls of rustling foliage. There is a double avenue of huge plane trees ascending across the fields towards the ancient castle of Gagny, now gone to rack and ruin. In this region, where drought is never known, vegetation of all kinds is wonderfully rank; it is like a flower garden down there in the low ground between those two wooded hills, a natural garden, where the lawns are broad meadows and the giant trees represent colossal beds. When the noon-day sun pours down his scorching rays the shadows lie blue upon the ground, the glowing vegetation slumbers in the heat, while every now and then a breath of icy coldness passes under the foliage.

Such was the spot where Father Merlier's mill enlivened with its cheerful clack nature run riot. The building itself, constructed of wood and plaster, looked as if it might be coeval with our planet. Its foundations were in part washed by the Morelle, which here expands into a clear pool. A

diam, a few feet in height, afforded sufficient head of water to drive the old wheel, which creaked and groaned as it revolved, with the asthmatic wheezing of a faithful servant who has grown old in her place. Whenever Father Merlier was advised to change it, he would shake his head and say that like as not a young wheel would be lazier and not so well acquainted with its duties, and then he would set to work and patch up the old one with anything that came to hand, old hogshead-staves, bits of rusty iron, zinc or lead. The old wheel only seemed the gayer for it, with its odd profile, all plumed and feathered with tufts of moss and grass, and when the water poured over it in a silver tide its gaunt black skeleton was decked out with a gorgeous display of pearls and diamonds.

That portion of the mill which was bathed by the Morelle had something of the look of a barbaric arch that had been dropped down there by chance. A good half of the structure was built on piles; the water came in under the floor, and there were deep holes, famous throughout the whole country for the eels and the huge crawfish that were to be caught there. Below the fall the pool was as clear as a mirror, and when it was not clouded by foam from the wheel one could see troops of great fish swimming about in it with the slow, majestic movements of a squadron. There was a broken stairway leading down to the stream, near a stake to which a boat was fastened, and over the wheel was a gallery of wood. Such windows as there were were arranged without any attempt at order. The whole was a quaint conglomeration of nooks and corners, bits of wall, additions made here and there as afterthoughts, beams and roofs, that gave the mill the aspect of an old dismantled citadel; but ivy and all sorts of creeping plants had grown luxuriantly and kindly covered up such crevices as were too unsightly, casting a mantle of green over the old dwelling. Young ladies who passed that way used to stop and sketch Father Merlier's mill in their albums.

The side of the house that faced the road was less irregular. A gateway in stone afforded access to the principal courtyard, on the right and left hand of which were sheds

and stables. Beside a well stood an immense elm that threw its shade over half the court. At the further end, opposite the gate, stood the house surmounted by a dovecote, the four windows of its first floor in a symmetrical line. The only vanity that Father Merlier ever allowed himself was to paint this façade every ten years. It had just been freshly whitened at the time of our story, and dazzled the eyes of all the village when the sun lighted it up in the middle of the day.

For twenty years had Father Merlier been mayor of Rocreuse. He was held in great consideration on account of his fortune; he was supposed to be worth something like eighty thousand francs, the result of patient saving. When he married Madeleine Guillard, who brought him the mill as her dowry, his entire capital lay in his two strong arms, but Madeleine had never repented of her choice, so manfully had he conducted their joint affairs. Now his wife was dead, and he was left a widower with his daughter Françoise. Doubtless he might have set himself down to take his rest, and suffered the old mill-wheel to sleep among its moss, but he would have found idleness too irksome and the house would have seemed dead to him. He kept on working still for the pleasure of it. In those days Father Merlier was a tall old man, with a long, silent face, on which a laugh was never seen, but beneath which there lay, none the less, a large fund of good-humour. He had been elected mayor on account of his money, and also for the impressive air that he knew how to assume when it devolved on him to marry a couple.

Françoise Merlier had just completed her eighteenth year. She was small, and for that reason was not accounted one of the beauties of the country. Until she reached the age of fifteen she had been even homely: the good folks of Rocreuse could not see how it was that the daughter of Father and Mother Merlier, such a hale, vigorous couple, had such a hard time of it in getting her growth. When she was fifteen, however, though still remaining delicate, a change came over her and she took on the prettiest little face imaginable. She had black hair, black eyes, and was

red as a rose withal; her mouth was always smiling, there were delicious dimples in her cheeks, and a crown of sunshine seemed to be ever resting on her fair, candid forehead. Although small as girls went in that region, she was far from being thin; she might not have been able to raise a sack of wheat to her shoulder, but she became quite plump as she grew older, and gave promise of becoming eventually as well-rounded and appetising as a partridge. Her father's habits of taciturnity had made her reflective while yet a young girl; if she always had a smile on her lips it was in order to give pleasure to others. Her natural disposition was serious.

As was no more than to be expected, she had every young man in the countryside at her heels as a suitor, more even for her money than her attractiveness, and she had made a choice at last, a choice that had been the talk and scandal of the entire neighbourhood.

On the other side of the Morelle lived a strapping young fellow who went by the name of Dominique Penquer. He was not to the manner born; ten years previously he had come to Rocreuse from Belgium to receive the inheritance of an uncle who had owned a small property on the very borders of the forest of Gagny, just facing the mill and distant from it only a few musket-shots. His object in coming was to sell the property, so he said, and return to his own home again; but he must have found the land to his liking, for he made no move to go away. He was seen cultivating his bit of a field and gathering the few vegetables that afforded him an existence. He fished, he hunted; more than once he was near coming in contact with the law through the intervention of the keepers. This independent way of living, of which the peasants could not very clearly see the resources, had in the end given him a bad name. He was vaguely looked on as nothing better than a poacher. At all events he was lazy, for he was frequently found sleeping in the grass at hours when he should have been at work. Then, too, the hut in which he lived, in the shade of the last trees of the forest, did not seem like the abode of an honest young man; the old women would

not have been surprised at any time to hear that he was on friendly terms with the wolves in the ruins of Gagny. Still, the young girls would now and then venture to stand up for him, for he was altogether a splendid specimen of manhood, was this individual of doubtful antecedents, tall and straight as a young poplar, with a milk-white skin and ruddy hair and moustaches that seemed to be of gold when the sun shone on them. Now one fine morning it came to pass that Françoise told Father Merlier that she loved Dominique, and that never, never would she consent to marry any other young man.

It may be imagined what a knockdown blow it was that Father Merlier received that day! As was his wont, he said never a word; his countenance wore its usual reflective look, only the fun that used to bubble up from within no longer shone in his eyes. Françoise, too, was very serious, and for a week father and daughter scarcely spoke to each other. What troubled Father Merlier was to know how that rascal of a poacher had succeeded in bewitching his daughter. Dominique had never shown himself at the mill. The miller played the spy a little, and was rewarded by catching sight of the gallant, on the other side of the Morelle, lying among the grass and pretending to be asleep. Françoise could see him from her chamber window. The thing was clear enough; they had been making sheep's-eyes at each other over the old mill-wheel, and so had fallen in love.

A week slipped by; Françoise became more and more serious. Father Merlier still continued to say nothing. Then, one evening, of his own accord, he brought Dominique to the house, without a word. Françoise was just setting the table. She made no demonstration of surprise; all she did was to add another plate, but her laugh had come back to her, and the little dimples appeared again upon her cheeks. Father Merlier had gone that morning to look for Dominique at his hut on the edge of the forest, and there the two men had had a conference, with closed doors and windows, that lasted three hours. No one ever knew what they said to each other; the only thing certain is that

when Father Merlier left the hut he already treated Dominique as a son. Doubtless the old man had discovered that he whom he had gone to visit was a worthy young fellow, even though he did lie in the grass to gain the love of young girls.

All Rocreuse was up in arms. The women gathered at their doors and could not find words strong enough to characterise Father Merlier's folly in thus receiving a ne'er-do-well into his family. He let them talk. Perhaps he thought of his own marriage. Neither had he possessed a penny to his name at the time he married Madeleine and her mill, and yet that had not prevented him from being a good husband to her. Moreover, Dominique put an end to their tittle-tattle by setting to work in such strenuous fashion that all the countryside was amazed. It so happened just then that the boy of the mill drew an unlucky number and had to go for a soldier, and Dominique would not hear of their engaging another. He lifted sacks, drove the cart, wrestled with the old wheel when it took an obstinate fit and refused to turn, and all so pluckily and cheerfully that people came from far and near merely for the pleasure of seeing him. Father Merlier laughed his silent laugh. He was highly elated that he had read the youngster aright. There is nothing like love to hearten up young men.

In the midst of all that laborious toil Françoise and Dominique fairly worshipped each other. They had not much to say, but their tender smiles conveyed a world of meaning. Father Merlier had not said a word thus far on the subject of their marriage, and they had both respected his silence, waiting until the old man should see fit to give expression to his will. At last, one day, toward the middle of July, he had had three tables laid in the courtyard, in the shade of the big elm, and had invited his friends of Rocreuse to come that afternoon and drink a glass of wine with him. When the courtyard was filled with people, and every one there had a full glass in his hand, Father Merlier raised his own high above his head and said:

"I have the pleasure of announcing to you that Françoise

and this lad will be married in a month from now, on St. Louis' fête-day."

Then there was a universal touching of glasses, attended by a tremendous uproar; every one was laughing. But Father Merlier, raising his voice above the din, again spoke:

"Dominique, kiss your wife that is to be. It is no more than customary."

And they kissed, very red in the face, both of them, while the company laughed louder still. It was a regular fête; they emptied a small cask. Then, when only the intimate friends of the house remained, conversation went on in a calmer strain. Night had fallen, a starlit night, and very clear. Dominique and Françoise sat on a bench, side by side, and said nothing. An old peasant spoke of the war that the Emperor had declared against Prussia. All the lads of the village were already gone off to the army. Troops had passed through the place only the night before. There were going to be hard knocks.

"Bah!" said Father Merlier, with the selfishness of a man who is quite happy, "Dominique is a foreigner; he won't have to go—and if the Prussians come this way, he will be here to defend his wife."

The idea of the Prussians coming there seemed to the company an exceedingly good joke. The army would give them one good conscientious thrashing, and the affair would be quickly ended.

"I have seen them before, I have seen them before," the old peasant repeated, in a low voice.

There was silence for a little, then they all touched glasses once again. Françoise and Dominique had heard nothing; they had managed to clasp hands behind the bench in such a way as not to be seen by the others, and this condition of affairs seemed so beatific to them that they sat there mute, their gaze lost in the darkness of the night.

What a magnificent, balmy night! The village lay slumbering on either side of the white road as peacefully as a little child. The deep silence was undisturbed save by the occasional crow of a cock in some distant barnyard acting on a mistaken impression that dawn was at hand. Per-

fumed breaths of air, like long-drawn sighs, came down from the great woods that lay around and above, sweeping softly over the roofs, as if caressing them. The meadows, with their black intensity of shadow, took on a dim, mysterious majesty of their own, while all the springs, all the brooks and watercourses that gurgled in the darkness, might have been taken for the cool and rhythmical breathing of the sleeping country. Every now and then the old dozing mill-wheel seemed to be dreaming like a watch-dog that barks uneasily in his slumber; it creaked, it talked to itself, rocked by the fall of the Morelle, whose current gave forth the deep, sustained music of an organ-pipe. Never was there a more charming or happier nook, never did a deeper peace come down to cover it.

II

One month later, to a day, on the eve of the fête of Saint Louis, Rocreuse was in a state of alarm and dismay. The Prussians had beaten the Emperor, and were advancing on the village by forced marches. For a week past people passing along the road had brought tidings of the enemy: "They are at Lormières, they are at Nouvelles;" and by dint of hearing so many stories of the rapidity of their advance, Rocreuse woke up every morning in the full expectation of seeing them swarming down out of Gagny wood. They did not come, however, and that only served to make the affright the greater. They would certainly fall upon the village in the night-time, and put every soul to the sword.

There had been an alarm the night before, a little before daybreak. The inhabitants had been aroused by a great noise of men tramping upon the road. The women were already throwing themselves upon their knees and making the sign of the cross, when some one, to whom it happily occurred to peep through a half-opened window, caught sight of red trousers. It was a French detachment. The captain had forthwith asked for the mayor, and, after a long conversation with Father Merlier, had remained at the mill.

The sun shone bright and clear that morning, giving promise of a warm day. There was a golden light floating over the woodland, while in the low grounds white mists were rising from the meadows. The pretty village, so neat and trim, awoke in the cool dawning, and the country, with its streams and its fountains, was as gracious as a freshly plucked bouquet. But the beauty of the day brought gladness to the face of no one; the villagers had watched the captain, and seen him circle round and round the old mill, examine the adjacent houses, then pass to the other bank of the Morelle, and from thence scan the country with a field-glass; Father Merlier, who accompanied him, appeared to be giving explanations. After that the captain had posted some of his men behind walls, behind trees, or in hollows. The main body of the detachment had encamped in the courtyard of the mill. So there was going to be a fight, then? And when Father Merlier returned they questioned him. He spoke no word, but slowly and sorrowfully nodded his head. Yes, there was going to be a fight.

Françoise and Dominique were there in the courtyard, watching him. He finally took his pipe from his lips and gave utterance to these few words:

"Ah! my poor children, I shall not be able to marry you to-day!"

Dominique, with lips tight set and an angry frown upon his forehead, raised himself on tiptoe from time to time and stood with eyes bent on Gagny wood, as if he would have been glad to see the Prussians appear and end the suspense they were in. Françoise, whose face was grave and very pale, was constantly passing back and forth, supplying the needs of the soldiers. They were preparing their soup in a corner of the courtyard, joking and chaffing one another while awaiting their meal.

The captain appeared to be highly pleased. He had visited the chambers and the great hall of the mill that looked out on the stream. Now, seated beside the well he was conversing with Father Merlier.

"You have a regular fortress here," he was saying

"We shall have no trouble in holding it until evening. The bandits are late; they ought to be here by this time."

The miller looked very grave. He saw his beloved mill going up in flame and smoke, but uttered no word of remonstrance or complaint, considering that it would be useless. He only opened his mouth to say:

"You ought to take steps to hide the boat; there is a hole behind the wheel fitted to hold it. Perhaps you may find it of use to you."

The captain gave an order to one of his men. This captain was a tall, fine-looking man of about forty, with an agreeable expression of countenance. The sight of Dominique and Françoise seemed to afford him much pleasure; he watched them as if he had forgotten all about the approaching conflict. He followed Françoise with his eyes as she moved about the courtyard, and his manner showed clearly enough that he thought her charming. Then, turning to Dominique:

"You are not with the army, I see, my boy?" he abruptly asked.

"I am a foreigner," the young man replied.

The captain did not seem particularly pleased with the answer; he winked his eyes and smiled. Françoise was doubtless a more agreeable companion than a musket would have been. Dominique, noticing his smile, made haste to add:

"I am a foreigner, but I can lodge a rifle bullet in an apple at five hundred yards. See, there's my rifle behind you."

"You may find use for it," the captain drily answered.

Françoise had drawn near; she was trembling a little, and Dominique, regardless of the bystanders, took and held firmly clasped in his own the two hands that she held forth to him, as if committing herself to his protection. The captain smiled again, but said nothing more. He remained seated, his sword between his legs, his eyes fixed on space, apparently lost in dreamy reverie.

It was ten o'clock. The heat was already oppressive. A deep silence prevailed. The soldiers had sat down in

the shade of the sheds in the courtyard and begun to eat their soup. Not a sound came from the village, where the inhabitants had all barricaded their houses, doors and windows. A dog, abandoned by his master, howled mournfully upon the road. From the woods and the near-by meadows, that lay fainting in the heat, came a long-drawn, whispering, sighing sound, produced by the union of what wandering breaths of air there were. A cuckoo called. Then the silence became deeper still.

And all at once, upon that lazy, sleepy air, a shot rang out. The captain rose quickly to his feet, the soldiers left their half-emptied plates. In a few seconds all were at their posts; the mill was occupied from top to bottom. And yet the captain, who had gone out through the gate, saw nothing; to right and left the road stretched away, desolate and blindingly white in the fierce sunshine. A second report was heard, and still nothing to be seen, not even so much as a shadow; but just as he was turning to re-enter he chanced to look over toward Gagny and there beheld a little puff of smoke floating away on the tranquil air, like thistledown. The deep peace of the forest was apparently unbroken.

"The rascals have occupied the wood," the officer murmured. "They know we are here."

Then the firing went on, and became more and more continuous between the French soldiers posted about the mill and the Prussians concealed among the trees. The bullets whistled over the Morelle without doing any mischief on either side. The firing was irregular; every bush seemed to have its marksman, and nothing was to be seen save those bluish smoke wreaths that hung for a moment on the wind before they vanished. It lasted thus for nearly two hours. The officer hummed a tune with a careless air. Françoise and Dominique, who had remained in the courtyard, raised themselves to look out over a low wall. They were more particularly interested in a little soldier who had his post on the bank of the Morelle, behind the hull of an old boat; he would lie face downward on the ground, watch his chance, deliver his fire, then slip back

into a ditch a few steps in his rear to reload, and his movements were so comical, he displayed such cunning and activity, that it was difficult for any one watching him to refrain from smiling. He must have caught sight of a Prussian, for he rose quickly and brought his piece to the shoulder, but before he could discharge it he uttered a loud cry, whirled completely around in his tracks and fell backward into the ditch, where for an instant his legs moved convulsively, just as the claws of a fowl do when it is beheaded. The little soldier had received a bullet directly through his heart. It was the first casualty of the day. Françoise instinctively seized Dominique's hand, and held it tight in a convulsive grasp.

"Come away from there," said the captain. "The bullets reach us here."

As if to confirm his words a slight, sharp sound was heard up in the old elm, and the end of a branch came to the ground, turning over and over as it fell, but the two young people never stirred, riveted to the spot as they were by the interest of the spectacle. On the edge of the wood a Prussian had suddenly emerged from behind a tree, as an actor comes upon the stage from the wings, beating the air with his arms and falling over upon his back. And beyond that there was no movement; the two dead men appeared to be sleeping in the bright sunshine; there was not a soul to be seen in the fields on which the heat lay heavy. Even the sharp rattle of the musketry had ceased. Only the Morelle kept on whispering to itself with its low, musical murmur.

Father Merlier looked at the captain with an astonished air, as if to inquire whether that were the end of it.

"Here comes their attack," the officer murmured. "Look out for yourself! Don't stand there!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a terrible discharge of musketry ensued. The great elm was riddled, its leaves came eddying down as thick as snowflakes. Fortunately, the Prussians had aimed too high. Dominique dragged, almost carried, Françoise from the spot, while Father Merlier followed them, shouting:

"Get into the small cellar, the walls are thicker there."

But they paid no attention to him; they made their way to the main hall, where ten or a dozen soldiers were silently waiting, watching events outside through the chinks of the closed shutters. The captain was left alone in the courtyard, where he sheltered himself behind the low wall, while the furious fire was maintained uninterruptedly. The soldiers whom he had posted outside only yielded their ground inch by inch; they came crawling in, however, one after another, as the enemy dislodged them from their positions. Their instructions were to gain all the time they could, taking care not to show themselves, in order that the Prussians might remain in ignorance of the force they had opposed to them. Another hour passed, and as a sergeant came in, reporting that there were now only two or three men left outside, the officer took his watch from his pocket, murmuring:

"Half-past two. Come, we must hold out for four hours yet."

He caused the great gate of the courtyard to be tightly secured, and everything was made ready for an energetic defence. The Prussians were on the other side of the Morelle, consequently there was no reason to fear an assault at the moment. There was a bridge indeed, a mile and a quarter away, but they were probably unaware of its existence, and it was hardly to be supposed that they would attempt to cross the stream by fording. The officer, therefore, simply caused the road to be watched; the attack, when it came, was to be looked for from the direction of the fields.

The firing had ceased again. The mill appeared to lie there in the sunlight, void of all life. Not a shutter was open, not a sound came from within. Gradually, however, the Prussians began to show themselves at the edge of Gagny wood. Heads were protruded here and there; they seemed to be mustering up their courage. Several of the soldiers within the mill brought up their pieces to an aim, but the captain shouted:

"No, no; not yet; wait. Let them come nearer."

They displayed a great deal of prudence in their advance, looking at the mill with a distrustful air; they seemed hardly to know what to make of the old structure, so lifeless and gloomy, with its curtain of ivy. Still they kept on advancing. When there were fifty of them or so in the open, directly opposite, the officer uttered one word:

"Now!"

A crashing, tearing discharge burst from the position, succeeded by an irregular, dropping fire. Françoise, trembling violently, involuntarily raised her hands to her ears. Dominique, from his position behind the soldiers, peered out upon the field, and when the smoke drifted away a little, counted three Prussians extended on their backs in the middle of the meadow. The others had sought shelter among the willows and the poplars. And then commenced the siege.

For more than an hour the mill was riddled with bullets; they beat and rattled on its old walls like hail. The noise they made was plainly audible as they struck the stonework, were flattened, and fell back into the water; they buried themselves in the woodwork with a dull thud. Occasionally a creaking sound would announce that the wheel had been hit. Within the building the soldiers husbanded their ammunition, firing only when they could see something to aim at. The captain kept consulting his watch every few minutes, and as a ball split one of the shutters in halves and then lodged in the ceiling:

"Four o'clock," he murmured. "We shall never be able to hold the position."

The old mill, in truth, was gradually going to pieces beneath that terrific fire. A shutter that had been perforated again and again, until it looked like a piece of lace, fell off its hinges into the water, and had to be replaced by a mattress. Every moment, almost, Father Merlier exposed himself to the fire in order to take account of the damage sustained by his poor wheel, every wound of which was like a bullet in his own heart. Its period of usefulness was ended this time for certain; he would never be able to patch

it up again. Dominique had besought Françoise to retire to a place of safety, but she was determined to remain with him; she had taken a seat behind a great oaken clothes-press, which afforded her protection. A ball struck the press, however, the sides of which gave out a dull hollow sound, whereupon Dominique stationed himself in front of Françoise. He had as yet taken no part in the firing, although he had his rifle in his hand; the soldiers occupied the whole breadth of the windows, so that he could not get near them. At every discharge the floor trembled.

"Look out! look out!" the captain suddenly shouted.

He had just descried a dark mass emerging from the wood. As soon as they gained the open they set up a telling platoon fire. It struck the mill like a tornado. Another shutter parted company, and the bullets came whistling in through the yawning aperture. Two soldiers rolled upon the floor; one lay where he fell and never moved a limb; his comrades pushed him up against the wall because he was in their way. The other writhed and twisted, beseeching someone to end his agony, but no one had ears for the poor wretch; the bullets were still pouring in, and every one was looking out for himself and searching for a loophole whence he might answer the enemy's fire. A third soldier was wounded; that one said not a word, but with staring, haggard eyes sank down beneath a table. Françoise, horror-stricken by the dreadful spectacle of the dead and dying men, mechanically pushed away her chair and seated herself on the floor, against the wall; it seemed to her that she would be smaller there and less exposed. In the meantime men had gone and secured all the mattresses in the house; the opening of the window was partially closed again. The hall was filled with *débris* of every description, broken weapons, dislocated furniture.

"Five o'clock," said the captain. "Stand fast, boys. They are going to make an attempt to pass the stream."

Just then Françoise gave a shriek. A bullet had struck the floor, and, rebounding, grazed her forehead on the ricochet. A few drops of blood appeared. Dominique looked at her, then went to the window and fired his first

shot, and from that time kept on firing uninterruptedly. He kept on loading and discharging his piece mechanically, paying no attention to what was passing at his side, only pausing from time to time to cast a look at Françoise. He did not fire hurriedly or at random, moreover, but took deliberate aim. As the captain had predicted, the Prussians were skirting the belt of poplars and attempting the passage of the Morelle, but each time that one of them showed himself he fell with one of Dominique's bullets in his brain. The captain, who was watching the performance, was amazed; he complimented the young man, telling him that he would like to have many more marksmen of his skill. Dominique did not hear a word he said. A ball struck him in the shoulder, another raised a contusion on his arm. And still he kept on firing.

There were two more deaths. The mattresses were torn to shreds and no longer availed to stop the windows. The last volley that was poured in seemed as if it would carry away the mill bodily, so fierce it was. The position was no longer tenable. Still, the officer kept repeating:

"Stand fast. Another half-hour yet."

He was counting the minutes, one by one, now. He had promised his commanders that he would hold the enemy there until nightfall, and he would not budge a hair's-breadth before the moment that he had fixed on for his withdrawal. He maintained his pleasant air of good-humour, smiling at Françoise by way of reassuring her. He had picked up the musket of one of the dead soldiers and was firing away with the rest.

There were but four soldiers left in the room. The Prussians were showing themselves *en masse* on the other side of the Morelle, and it was evident that they might now pass the stream at any moment. A few moments more elapsed; the captain was as determined as ever, and would not give the order to retreat, when a sergeant came running into the room, saying:

"They are on the road; they are going to take us in rear."

The Prussians must have discovered the bridge. The captain drew out his watch again.

"Five minutes more," he said. "They won't be here within five minutes."

Then exactly at six o'clock he at last withdrew his men through a little postern that opened on a narrow lane, whence they threw themselves into the ditch, and in that way reached the forest of Sauval. The captain took leave of Father Merlier with much politeness, apologising profusely for the trouble he had caused. He even added:

"Try to keep them occupied for a while. We shall return."

While this was occurring Dominique had remained alone in the hall. He was still firing away, hearing nothing, conscious of nothing; his sole thought was to defend François. The soldiers were all gone, and he had not the remotest idea of the fact; he aimed and brought down his man at every shot. All at once there was a great tumult. The Prussians had entered the courtyard from the rear. He fired his last shot, and they fell upon him with his weapon still smoking in his hand.

It required four men to hold him; the rest of them swarmed about him, vociferating like madmen in their horrible dialect. Françoise rushed forward to intercede with her prayers. They were on the point of killing him on the spot, but an officer came in and made them turn the prisoner over to him. After exchanging a few words in German with his men he turned to Dominique and said to him roughly, in very good French:

"You will be shot in two hours from now."

III

It was the standing regulation, laid down by the German staff, that every Frenchman, not belonging to the regular army, taken with arms in his hands should be shot. Even the *compagnies franches* were not recognized as belligerents. It was the intention of the Germans, in making such terrible examples of the peasants who attempted to defend their firesides, to prevent a rising *en masse*, which they greatly dreaded.

The officer, a tall, square man about fifty years old, subjected Dominique to a brief examination. Although he spoke French fluently, he was unmistakably Prussian in the stiffness of his manner.

"You are a native of this country?"

"No, I am a Belgian."

"Why did you take up arms? These are matters with which you have no concern."

Dominique made no reply. At this moment the officer caught sight of Françoise where she stood listening, very pale; her slight wound had marked her white forehead with a streak of red. He looked from one to the other of the young people and appeared to understand the situation: he merely added:

"You do not deny having fired on my men?"

"I fired as long as I was able to do so," Dominique quietly replied.

The admission was scarcely necessary, for he was black with powder, wet with sweat, and the blood from the wound in his shoulder had trickled down and stained his clothing.

"Very well," the officer repeated. "You will be shot two hours hence."

Françoise uttered no cry. She clasped her hands and raised them above her head in a gesture of mute despair. Her action was not lost upon the officer. Two soldiers had led Dominique away to an adjacent room, where their orders were to guard him and not lose sight of him. The girl had sunk upon a chair; her strength had failed her, her legs refused to support her; she was denied the relief of tears, it seemed as if her emotion was strangling her. The officer continued to examine her attentively, and finally addressed her:

"Is that young man your brother?" he inquired.

She shook her head in negation. He was as rigid and unbending as ever, without the suspicion of a smile on his face. Then, after an interval of silence, he spoke again:

"Has he been living in the neighbourhood long?"

She answered yes, by another motion of the head.

"Then he must be well acquainted with the woods about here?"

This time she made a verbal answer. "Yes, sir," she said, looking at him with some astonishment.

He said nothing more, but turned on his heel, requesting that the mayor of the village should be brought before him. But Françoise had risen from her chair, a faint tinge of colour on her cheeks, believing that she had caught the significance of his questions, and with renewed hope she ran off to look for her father.

As soon as the firing had ceased Father Merlier had hurriedly descended by the wooden gallery to have a look at his wheel. He adored his daughter and had a strong feeling of affection for Dominique, his son-in-law who was to be; but his wheel also occupied a large space in his heart. Now that the two little ones, as he called them, had come safe and sound out of the fray, he thought of his other love, which must have suffered sorely, poor thing, and bending over the great wooden skeleton he was scrutinising its wounds with a heart-broken air. Five of the buckets were reduced to splinters, the central framework was honeycombed. He was thrusting his fingers into the cavities that the bullets had made to see how deep they were and reflecting how he was ever to repair all that damage. When Françoise found him he was already plugging up the crevices with moss and such débris as he could lay hands on.

"They are asking for you, father," said he.

And at last she wept as she told him what she had just heard. Father Merlier shook his head. It was not customary to shoot people like that. He would have to look into the matter. And he re-entered the mill with his usual placid, silent air. When the officer made his demand for supplies for his men, he answered that the people of Roceuse were not accustomed to be ridden roughshod, and that nothing would be obtained from them through violence; he was willing to assume all the responsibility, but only on condition that he was allowed to act independently. The officer at first appeared to take umbrage at this easy way of viewing matters, but finally gave way before the old

man's brief and distinct representations. As the latter was leaving the room the other recalled him to ask:

"Those woods there, opposite, what do you call them?"

"The woods of Sauval."

"And how far do they extend?"

The miller looked him straight in the face. "I do not know," he replied.

And he withdrew. An hour later the subvention in money and provisions that the officer had demanded was in the courtyard of the mill. Night was coming in; Françoise followed every movement of the soldiers with an anxious eye. She never once left the vicinity of the room in which Dominique was imprisoned. About seven o'clock she had a harrowing emotion; she saw the officer enter the prisoner's apartment, and for a quarter of an hour heard their voices raised in violent discussion. The officer came to the door for a moment and gave an order in German which she did not understand, but when twelve men came and formed in the courtyard with shouldered muskets, she was seized with a fit of trembling and felt as if she should die. It was all over then; the execution was about to take place. The twelve men remained there ten minutes; Dominique's voice kept rising higher and higher in a tone of vehement denial. Finally the officer came out, closing the door behind him with a vicious bang and saying:

"Very well; think it over. I give you until to-morrow morning."

And he ordered the twelve men to break ranks by a motion of his hand. Françoise was stupefied. Father Merlier, who had continued to puff away at his pipe while watching the platoon with a simple, curious air, came and took her by the arm with fatherly gentleness. He led her to her chamber.

"Don't fret," he said to her; "try to get some sleep. To-morrow it will be light and we shall see more clearly."

He locked the door behind him as he left the room. It was a fixed principle with him that women are good for nothing, and that they spoil everything whenever they meddle in important matters. Françoise did not lie down,

however; she remained a long time seated on her bed, listening to the various noises in the house. The German soldiers quartered in the courtyard were singing and laughing; they must have kept up their eating and drinking until eleven o'clock, for the riot never ceased for an instant. Heavy footsteps resounded from time to time through the mill itself, doubtless the tramp of the guards as they were relieved. What had most interest for her was the sounds that she could catch in the room that lay directly under her own; several times she threw herself prone upon the floor and applied her ear to the boards. That room was the one in which they had locked up Dominique. He must have been pacing the apartment, for she could hear for a long time his regular, cadenced tread passing from the wall to the window and back again; then there was a deep silence; doubtless he had seated himself. The other sounds ceased too; everything was still. When it seemed to her that the house was sunk in slumber she raised her window as noiselessly as possible and leaned out.

Without, the night was serene and balmy. The slender crescent of the moon, which was just setting behind Sauval wood, cast a dim radiance over the landscape. The lengthening shadows of the great trees stretched far athwart the fields in bands of blackness, while in such spots as were unobscured the grass appeared of a tender green, soft as velvet. But Françoise did not stop to consider the mysterious charm of night. She was scrutinising the country and looking to see where the Germans had posted their sentinels. She could clearly distinguish their dark forms outlined along the course of the Morelle. There was only one stationed opposite the mill, on the far bank of the stream, by a willow whose branches dipped in the water. Françoise had an excellent view of him; he was a tall young man, standing quite motionless with face upturned toward the sky, with the meditative air of a shepherd.

When she had completed her careful inspection of localities she returned and took her former seat upon the bed. She remained there an hour, absorbed in deep thought. Then she listened again; there was not a breath to be heard

in the house. She went again to the window and took another look outside, but one of the moon's horns was still hanging above the edge of the forest, and this circumstance doubtless appeared to her unpropitious, for she resumed her waiting. At last the moment seemed to have arrived; the night was now quite dark; she could no longer discern the sentinel opposite her, the landscape lay before her black as a sea of ink. She listened intently for a moment, then formed her resolve. Close beside her window was an iron ladder made of bars set in the wall, which ascended from the mill-wheel to the granary at the top of the building, and had formerly served the miller as a means of inspecting certain portions of the gearing, but a change having been made in the machinery the ladder had long since become lost to sight beneath the thick ivy that covered all that side of the mill.

Françoise bravely climbed over the balustrade of the little balcony in front of her window, grasped one of the iron bars and found herself suspended in space. She commenced the descent; her skirts were a great hindrance to her. Suddenly a stone became loosened from the wall and fell into the Morelle with a loud splash. She stopped, benumbed with fear, but reflection quickly told her that the waterfall, with its continuous roar, was sufficient to deaden any noise that she could make, and then she descended more boldly, putting aside the ivy with her foot, testing each round of her ladder. When she was on a level with the room that had been converted into a prison for her lover she stopped. An unforeseen difficulty came near depriving her of all her courage: the window of the room beneath was not situated directly under the window of her bedroom; there was a wide space between it and the ladder, and when she extended her hand it only encountered the naked wall.

Would she have to go back the way she came and leave her project unaccomplished? Her arms were growing very tired; the murmuring of the Morelle, far down below, was beginning to make her dizzy. Then she broke off bits of plaster from the wall and threw them against Dominique's

window. He did not hear; perhaps he was asleep. Again she crumbled fragments from the wall, until the skin was peeled from her fingers. Her strength was exhausted; she felt that she was about to fall backward into the stream when at last Dominique softly raised his sash.

"It is I," she murmured. "Take me quick; I am about to fall." Leaning from the window he grasped her and drew her into the room, where she had a paroxysm of weeping, stifling her sobs in order that she might not be heard. Then, by a supreme effort of the will she overcame her emotion.

"Are you guarded?" she asked in a low voice.

Dominique, not yet recovered from his stupefaction at seeing her there, made answer by simply pointing toward his door. There was a sound of snoring audible on the outside; it was evident that the sentinel had been overpowered by sleep and had thrown himself upon the floor close against the door in such a way that it could not be opened without arousing him.

"You must fly," she continued earnestly. "I came here to bid you fly and say farewell."

But he seemed not to hear her. He kept repeating:

"What, is it you, is it you? Oh, what a fright you gave me! You might have killed yourself." He took her hands, he kissed them again and again. "How I love you, Françoise! You are as courageous as you are good. The only thing I feared was that I might die without seeing you again; but you are here, and now they may shoot me when they will. Let me but have a quarter of an hour with you and I am ready."

He had gradually drawn her to him; her head was resting on his shoulder. The peril that was so near at hand brought them closer to each other, and they forgot everything in that long embrace.

"Ah, Françoise!" Dominique went on in low, caressing tones, "to-day is the fête of Saint Louis, our wedding-day, that we have been waiting for so long. Nothing has been able to keep us apart, for we are both here, faithful to our appointment, are we not? It is now our wedding morning."

"Yes, yes," she repeated after him, "our wedding morning."

They shuddered as they exchanged a kiss. But suddenly she tore herself from his arms; the terrible reality arose before her eyes.

"You must fly, you must fly," she murmured breathlessly. "There is not a moment to lose." And as he stretched out his arms in the darkness to draw her to him again, she went on in tender, beseeching tones: "Oh, listen to me, I entreat you. If you die, I shall die. In an hour it will be daylight. Go, go at once; I command you to go."

Then she rapidly explained her plan to him. The iron ladder extended downward to the wheel; once he had got so far he could climb down by means of the buckets and get into the boat, which was hidden in a recess. Then it would be an easy matter for him to reach the other bank of the stream and make his escape.

"But are there no sentinels?" said he.

"Only one, directly opposite here, at the foot of the first willow."

"And if he sees me, if he gives the alarm?"

Françoise shuddered. She placed in his hand a knife that she had brought down with her. They were silent.

"And your father—and you?" Dominique continued. "But no, it is not to be thought of; I must not fly. When I am no longer here those soldiers are capable of murdering you. You do not know them. They offered to spare my life if I would guide them into Sauval forest. When they discover that I have escaped, their fury will be such that they will be ready for every atrocity."

The girl did not stop to argue the question. To all the considerations that he adduced to her one simple answer was: "Fly. For the love of me, fly. If you love me, Dominique, do not linger here a single moment longer."

She promised that she would return to her bedroom; no one should know that she had helped him. She concluded by folding him in her arms and smothering him with kisses, in an extravagant outburst of passion. He was vanquished. He put only one more question to her:

"Will you swear to me that your father knows what you are doing, and that he counsels my flight?"

"It was my father who sent me to you," Françoise unhesitatingly replied.

She told a falsehood. At that moment she had but one great, overmastering longing, to know that he was in safety, to escape from the horrible thought that the morning's sun was to be the signal for his death. When he should be far away, then calamity and evil might burst upon her head; whatever fate might be in store for her would seem endurable, so that only his life might be spared. Before and above all other considerations, the selfishness of her love demanded that he should be saved.

"It is well," said Dominique; "I will do as you desire."

No further word was spoken. Dominique went to the window to raise it again. But suddenly there was a noise that chilled them with affright. The door was shaken violently; they thought that some one was about to open it; it was evidently a party going the rounds who had heard their voices. They stood by the window, close locked in each other's arms, awaiting the event with anguish unspeakable. Again there came the rattling at the door, but it did not open. Each of them drew a deep sigh of relief; they saw how it was. The soldier lying across the threshold had turned over in his sleep. Silence was restored indeed, and presently the snoring began again.

Dominique insisted that Françoise should return to her room first of all. He took her in his arms, he bade her a silent farewell, then helped her to grasp the ladder, and himself climbed out on it in turn. He refused to descend a single step, however, until he knew that she was in her chamber. When she was safe in her room she let fall, in a voice scarce louder than a whisper, the words:

"Au revoir. I love you!"

She kneeled at the window, resting her elbows on the sill, straining her eyes to follow Dominique. The night was still very dark. She looked for the sentinel, but could see nothing of him; the willow alone was dimly visible, a pale spot upon the surrounding blackness. For a moment

she heard the rustling of the ivy as Dominique descended, then the wheel creaked, and there was a faint plash which told that the young man had found the boat. This was confirmed when, a minute later, she descried the shadowy outline of the skiff on the grey bosom of the Morelle. Then a horrible feeling of dread seemed to clutch her by the throat. Every moment she thought she heard the sentry give the alarm; every faintest sound among the dusky shadows seemed to her overwrought imagination to be the hurrying tread of soldiers, the clash of steel, the click of musket-locks. The seconds slipped by, however, the landscape still preserved its solemn peace. Dominique must have landed safely on the other bank. Françoise no longer had eyes for anything. The silence was oppressive. And she heard the sound of trampling feet, a hoarse cry, the dull thud of a heavy body falling. This was followed by another silence, even deeper than that which had gone before. Then, as if conscious that Death had passed that way, she became very cold in presence of the impenetrable night.

IV

At early daybreak the repose of the mill was disturbed by the clamour of angry voices. Father Merlier had gone and unlocked Françoise's door. She descended to the courtyard, pale and very calm, but when there, could not repress a shudder upon being brought face to face with the body of a Prussian soldier that lay on the ground beside the well, stretched out upon a cloak.

Around the corpse soldiers were shouting and gesticulating angrily. Several of them shook their fists threateningly in the direction of the village. The officer had just sent a summons to Father Merlier to appear before him in his capacity as mayor of the commune.

"Here is one of our men," he said, in a voice that was almost unintelligible from anger, "who was found murdered on the bank of the stream. The murderer must be found, so that we may make a salutary example of him, and I shall expect you to co-operate with us in finding him."

"Whatever you desire," the miller replied, with his customary impassiveness. "Only it will be no easy matter."

The officer stooped down and drew aside the skirt of the cloak which concealed the dead man's face, disclosing as he did so a frightful wound. The sentinel had been struck in the throat and the weapon had not been withdrawn from the wound. It was a common kitchen-knife, with a black handle.

"Look at that knife," the officer said to Father Merlier. "Perhaps it will assist us in our investigation."

The old man had started violently, but recovered himself at once; not a muscle of his face moved as he replied:

"Every one about here has knives like that. Like enough your man was tired of fighting and did the business himself. Such things have happened before now."

"Be silent!" the officer shouted in a fury. "I don't know what it is that keeps me from setting fire to the four corners of your village."

His anger fortunately kept him from noticing the great change that had come over Françoise's countenance. Her feelings had compelled her to sit down upon the stone bench beside the well. Do what she would she could not remove her eyes from the body that lay stretched upon the ground, almost at her feet. He had been a tall, handsome young man in life, very like Dominique in appearance, with blue eyes and yellow hair. The resemblance went to her heart. She thought that perhaps the dead man had left behind him in his German home some sweetheart who would weep for his loss. And she recognised her knife in the dead man's throat. She had killed him.

The officer, meantime, was talking of visiting Rocreuse with some terrible punishment, when two or three soldiers came running in. The guard had just that moment ascertained the fact of Dominique's escape. The agitation caused by the tidings was extreme. The officer went to inspect the locality, looked out through the still open window, saw at once how the event had happened, and returned in a state of exasperation.

Father Merlier appeared greatly vexed by Dominique's

flight. "The idiot!" he murmured; he has upset everything."

Françoise heard him, and was in an agony of suffering. Her father, moreover, had no suspicion of her complicity. He shook his head, saying to her in an undertone:

"We are in a nice box now!"

"It was that scoundrel! it was that scoundrel!" cried the officer. "He has got away to the woods; but he must be found, or the village shall stand the consequences." And addressing himself to the miller: "Come, you must know where he is hiding?"

Father Merlier laughed in his silent way, and pointed to the wide stretch of wooded hills.

"How can you expect to find a man in that wilderness?" he asked.

"Oh! there are plenty of hiding-places that you are acquainted with. I am going to give you ten men; you shall act as guide to them."

"I am perfectly willing. But it will take a week to beat up all the woods of the neighbourhood."

The old man's serenity enraged the officer; he saw, indeed, what a ridiculous proceeding such a hunt would be. It was at that moment that he caught sight of Françoise where she sat, pale and trembling, on her bench. His attention was aroused by the girl's anxious attitude. He was silent for a moment, glancing suspiciously from father to daughter and back again.

"Is not that man," he at last coarsely asked the old man, "your daughter's lover?"

Father Merlier's face became ashy pale, and he appeared for a moment as if about to throw himself on the officer and throttle him. He straightened himself up and made no reply. Françoise had hidden her face in her hands.

"Yes, that is how it is," the Prussian continued; "you or your daughter have helped him to escape. You are his accomplices. For the last time, will you surrender him?"

The miller did not answer. He had turned away and was looking at the distant landscape with an air of indifference,

just as if the officer were talking to some other person. That put the finishing touch to the latter's wrath.

"Very well, then!" he declared, "you shall be shot in his stead."

And again he ordered out the firing party. Father Merlier was as imperturbable as ever. He scarcely did so much as shrug his shoulders; the whole drama appeared to him to be in very doubtful taste. He probably believed that they would not take a man's life in that unceremonious manner. When the platoon was on the ground he gravely said:

"So, then, you are in earnest? Very well, I am willing it should be so. If you feel you must have a victim, it may as well be I as another."

But Françoise arose, greatly troubled, stammering: "Have mercy, sir; do not harm my father. Kill me instead of him. It was I who helped Dominique to escape; I am the only guilty one."

"Hold your tongue, my girl," Father Merlier exclaimed. "Why do you tell such a falsehood? She passed the night locked in her room, sir; I assure you that she does not speak the truth."

"I *am* speaking the truth," the girl eagerly replied. "I got down by the window; I incited Dominique to fly. It is the truth, the whole truth."

The old man's face was very white. He could read in her eyes that she was not lying, and her story terrified him. Ah, those children! those children! how they spoiled everything, with their hearts and their feelings! Then he said angrily:

"She is crazy; do not listen to her. It is a lot of trash she is telling you. Come, let us get through with this business."

She persisted in her protestations; she kneeled, she raised her clasped hands in supplication. The officer stood tranquilly by and watched the harrowing scene.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he said at last, "I take your father because the other has escaped me. Bring me back the other man, and your father shall have his liberty."

She looked at him for a moment with eyes dilated by the horror which his proposal inspired in her.

"It is dreadful," she murmured. "Where can I look for Dominique now? He is gone; I know nothing beyond that."

"Well, make your choice between them; him or your father."

"Oh, my God! how can I choose? Even if I knew where to find Dominique I could not choose. You are breaking my heart. I would rather die at once. Yes, it would be more quickly ended thus. Kill me, I beseech you, kill me——"

The officer finally became weary of this scene of despair and tears. He cried:

"Enough of this! I wish to treat you kindly; I will give you two hours. If your lover is not here within two hours, your father shall pay the penalty that he has incurred."

And he ordered Father Merlier away to the room that had served as a prison for Dominique. The old man asked for tobacco, and began to smoke. There was no trace of emotion to be descried on his impassive face. Only when he was alone he wept two big tears that coursed slowly down his cheeks. His poor, dear child, what a fearful trial she was enduring!

Françoise remained in the courtyard. Prussian soldiers passed back and forth, laughing. Some of them addressed her with coarse pleasantries which she did not understand. Her gaze was bent upon the door through which her father had disappeared, and with a slow movement she raised her hand to her forehead, as if to keep it from bursting. The officer turned sharply on his heel, and said to her:

"You have two hours. Try to make good use of them."

She had two hours. The words kept buzzing, buzzing in her ears. Then she went forth mechanically from the courtyard; she walked straight ahead with no definite end. Where was she to go? what was she to do? She did not even endeavour to arrive at any decision, for she felt how utterly useless were her efforts. And yet she would have liked to see Dominique; they could have come to some understanding together, perhaps they might hit on some plan to extricate them from their difficulties. And so, amid the

confusion of her whirling thoughts, she took her way downward to the bank of the Morelle, which she crossed below the dam by means of some stepping-stones which were there. Proceeding onward, still involuntarily, she came to the first willow, at the corner of the meadow, and stooping down, beheld a sight that made her grow deathly pale—a pool of blood. It was the spot. And she followed the track that Dominique had left in the tall grass; it was evident that he had run, for the footsteps that crossed the meadow in a diagonal line were separated from one another by wide intervals. Then, beyond that point, she lost the trace, but thought she had discovered it again in an adjoining field. It led her onward to the border of the forest, where the trail came abruptly to an end.

Though conscious of the futility of the proceeding, Françoise penetrated into the wood. It was a comfort to her to be alone. She sat down for a moment, then, reflecting that time was passing, rose again to her feet. How long was it since she left the mill? Five minutes, or a half-hour? She had lost all idea of time. Perhaps Dominique had sought concealment in a clearing that she knew of, where they had gone together one afternoon and eaten hazel-nuts. She directed her steps toward the clearing; she searched it thoroughly. A blackbird flew out, whistling his sweet and melancholy note; that was all. Then she thought that he might have taken refuge in a hollow among the rocks where he went sometimes with his gun, but the spot was untenanted. What use was there in looking for him? She would never find him, and little by little the desire to discover the hiding-place became a passionate longing. She proceeded at a more rapid pace. The idea suddenly took possession of her that he had climbed into a tree, and thenceforth she went along with eyes raised aloft and called him by name every fifteen or twenty steps, so that he might know she was near him. The cuckoos answered her; a breath of air that rustled the leaves made her think that he was there and was coming down to her. Once she even imagined that she saw him; she stopped with a sense of suffocation, with a desire to run away. What was she to say to him? Had she

come there to take him back with her and have him shot? Oh! no, she would not mention those things; she would not tell him that he must fly, that he must not remain in the neighbourhood. Then she thought of her father awaiting her return, and the reflection caused her most bitter anguish. She sank upon the turf, weeping hot tears, crying aloud:

"My God! My God! why am I here!"

It was a mad thing for her to have come. And as if seized with sudden panic, she ran hither and thither, she sought to make her way out of the forest. Three times she lost her way, and had begun to think she was never to see the mill again, when she came out into a meadow, directly opposite Rocreuse. As soon as she caught sight of the village she stopped. Was she going to return alone?

She was standing there when she heard a voice calling her by name, softly:

"Françoise! François!"

And she beheld Dominique raising his head above the edge of a ditch. Just God! she had found him.

Could it be, then, that Heaven willed his death? She suppressed a cry that rose to her lips, and slipped into the ditch beside him.

"You were looking for me?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied bewilderedly, scarcely knowing what she was saying.

"Ah! what has happened?"

She stammered, with eyes downcast: "Why, nothing; I was anxious, I wanted to see you."

Thereupon, his fears alleviated, he went on to tell her how it was that he had remained in the vicinity. He was alarmed for them. Those rascally Prussians were not wreaking their vengeance on women and old men. All had ended well, however, and he added, laughing:

"The wedding will be put off for a week, that's all."

He became serious, however, upon noticing that her dejection did not pass away.

"But what is the matter? You are concealing something from me."

"No, I give you my word I am not. I am tired; I ran all the way here."

He kissed her, saying it was imprudent for them both to talk there any longer, and was about to climb out of the ditch in order to return to the forest. She stopped him; she was trembling violently.

"Listen, Dominique; perhaps it will be as well for you to stay here, after all. There is no one looking for you; you have nothing to fear."

"Françoise, you are concealing something from me," he said again.

Again she protested that she was concealing nothing. She only liked to know that he was near her. And there were other reasons still that she gave in stammering accents. Her manner was so strange that no consideration could now have induced him to go away. He believed, moreover, that the French would return presently. Troops had been seen over towards Sauval.

"Ah! let them make haste; let them come as quickly as possible," she murmured fervently.

At that moment the clock of the church at Rocreuse struck eleven; the strokes reached them, clear and distinct. She arose in terror; it was two hours since she had left the mill.

"Listen," she said, with feverish rapidity, "should we need you, I will go up to my room and wave my handkerchief from the window."

And she started off homeward on a run, while Dominique, greatly disturbed in mind, stretched himself at length beside the ditch to watch the mill. Just as she was about to enter the village Françoise encountered an old beggar man, Father Bontemps, who knew every one and everything in that part of the country. He saluted her; he had just seen the miller, he said, surrounded by a crowd of Prussians; then, making numerous signs of the Cross and mumbling some inarticulate words, he went his way.

"The two hours are up," the officer said when Françoise made her appearance.

Father Merlier was there, seated on the bench beside the well. He was smoking still. The young girl again proffered

her supplication, kneeling before the officer and weeping. Her wish was to gain time. The hope that she might yet behold the return of the French had been gaining strength in her bosom, and amid her tears and sobs she thought she could distinguish in the distance the cadenced tramp of an advancing army. Oh! if they would but come and deliver them all from their fearful trouble!

"Hear me, sir: grant us an hour, just one little hour. Surely you will not refuse to grant us an hour!"

But the officer was inflexible. He even ordered two men to lay hold of her and take her away, in order that they might proceed undisturbed with the execution of the old man. Then a dreadful conflict took place in Françoise's heart. She could not allow her father to be murdered in that manner; no, no, she would die in company with Dominique rather; and she was just darting away in the direction of her room in order to signal to her *fiancé*, when Dominique himself entered the courtyard.

The officer and his soldiers gave a great shout of triumph, but he, as if there had been no soul there but Françoise, walked straight up to her: he was perfectly calm, and his face wore a slight expression of sternness.

"You did wrong," he said. "Why did you not bring me back with you? Had it not been for Father Bontemps I should have known nothing of all this. Well, I am here, at all events."

V

It was three o'clock. The heavens were piled high with great black clouds, the tail-end of a storm that had been raging somewhere in the vicinity. Beneath the coppery sky and ragged scud the valley of Rocreuse, so bright and smiling in the sunlight, became a grim chasm, full of sinister shadows. The Prussian officer had done nothing with Dominique beyond placing him in confinement, giving no indication of his ultimate purpose in regard to him. Françoise, since noon, had been suffering unendurable agony; notwithstanding her father's entreaties, she would not leave the courtyard. She was waiting for the French troops to ap-

pear, but the hours slipped by, night was approaching, and she suffered all the more since it appeared as if the time thus gained would have no effect on the final result.

About three o'clock, however, the Prussians began to make their preparations for departure. The officer had gone to Dominique's room and remained closeted with him for some minutes, as he had done the day before. Françoise knew that the young man's life was hanging in the balance; she clasped her hands and put up fervent prayers. Beside her sat Father Merlier, rigid and silent, declining, like the true peasant he was, to attempt any interference with accomplished facts.

"Oh! my God! my God!" Françoise exclaimed, "they are going to kill him!"

The miller drew her to him, and took her on his lap as if she had been a little child. At this juncture the officer came from the room, followed by two men conducting Dominique between them.

"Never, never!" the latter exclaimed. "I am ready to die."

"You had better think the matter over," the officer replied. "I shall have no trouble in finding some one else to render us the service which you refuse. I am generous with you; I offer you your life. It is simply a matter of guiding us across the forest to Montredon; there must be paths."

Dominique made no answer.

"Then you persist in your obstinacy?"

"Shoot me, and let's have done with it," he replied.

Françoise, in the distance, entreated her lover with clasped hands; she was forgetful of all considerations save one—she would have had him commit a treason. But Father Merlier seized her hands, that the Prussians might not see the wild gestures of a woman whose mind was disordered by her distress.

"He is right," he murmured. "it is best for him to die."

The firing-party was in readiness. The officer still had hopes of bringing Dominique over, and was waiting to see him exhibit some signs of weakness. Deep silence prevailed. Heavy peals of thunder were heard in the distance, the fields

and woods lay lifeless beneath the sweltering heat. And it was in the midst of this oppressive silence that suddenly the cry arose:

"The French; the French!"

It was a fact; they were coming. The line of red trousers could be seen advancing along the Sauval road, at the edge of the forest. In the mill the confusion was extreme; the Prussian soldiers ran to and fro, giving vent to guttural cries. Not a shot had been fired as yet.

"The French! the French!" cried Françoise, clapping her hands for joy. She was like a woman possessed. She had escaped from her father's embrace and was laughing boisterously, her arms raised high in the air. They had come at last, then, and had come in time, since Dominique was still there, alive!

A crash of musketry that rang in her ears like a thunder-clap caused her to suddenly turn her head. The officer had muttered, "We will finish this business first," and with his own hands pushing Dominique up against the wall of a shed, had given the command to the squad to fire. When Françoise turned, Dominique was lying on the ground, pierced by a dozen bullets.

She did not shed a tear; she stood there like one suddenly rendered senseless. Her eyes were fixed and staring, and she went and seated herself beneath the shed, a few steps from the lifeless body. She looked at it wistfully; now and then she would make a movement with her hands in an aimless, childish way. The Prussians had seized Father Merlier as a hostage.

It was a pretty fight. The officer, perceiving that he could not retreat without being cut to pieces, rapidly made the best disposition possible of his men; it was as well to sell their lives dearly. The Prussians were now the defenders of the mill, and the French were the attacking party. The musketry fire began with unparalled fury; for half an hour there was no lull in the storm. Then a deep report was heard, and a ball carried away a main branch of the old elm. The French had artillery; a battery, in position just beyond the ditch where Dominique had concealed himself, commanded

the main street of Rocreuse. The conflict could not last long after that.

Ah! the poor old mill! The cannon-balls raked it from wall to wall. Half the roof was carried away; two of the walls fell in. But it was on the side toward the Morelle that the damage was most lamentable. The ivy, torn from the tottering walls, hung in tatters, débris of every description floated away upon the bosom of the stream, and through a great breach Françoise's chamber was visible, with its little bed, the snow-white curtains of which were carefully drawn. Two balls struck the old wheel in quick succession, and it gave one parting groan; the buckets were carried away down stream, the frame was crushed into a shapeless mass. It was the soul of the stout old mill parting from the body.

Then the French came forward to carry the place by storm. There was a mad hand-to-hand conflict with the bayonet. Under the dull sky the pretty valley became a huge slaughter-pen; the broad meadows looked on in horror, with their great isolated trees and their rows of poplars, dotting them with shade, while to right and left the forest was like the walls of a tilting-ground enclosing the combatants, and in Nature's universal panic the gentle murmur of the springs and water-courses sounded like sobs and wails.

Françoise had not stirred from the shed where she remained hanging over Dominique's body. Father Merlier had met his death from a stray bullet. Then the French captain, the Prussians being exterminated and the mill on fire, entered the courtyard at the head of his men. It was the first success that he had gained since the breaking out of the war, so, all inflamed with enthusiasm, drawing himself up to the full height of his lofty stature, he laughed pleasantly, as a handsome cavalier like him might laugh. Then, perceiving poor idiotic Françoise where she crouched between the corpses of her father and her intended, among the smoking ruins of the mill, he saluted her gallantly with his sword, and shouted:

"Victory! Victory!"

THE ELIXIR OF THE REV. FATHER GAUCHER

(*L'Élixir du Père Gaucher*)

By ALPHONSE DAUDET

“**D**RINK this, neighbour, and tell me what you think of it.”

And drop by drop, with the painstaking care of a lapidary counting pearls, the curé of Graveson poured out for me two fingers of a golden-green, warm, sparkling, exquisite liqueur. My stomach was as if bathed in sunlight.

“This is Father Gaucher’s elixir, the joy and health of our Provence,” said the worthy man, with a triumphant air; “it is made at the convent of Prémontès, two leagues from your mill. Isn’t it better than all the chartreuses on earth? And if you knew how interesting the story of this elixir is! Listen.”

Thereupon, as artlessly as possible, without the slightest tinge of irony, in that parsonage dining-room, so placid and calm, with its *Road to the Cross* in tiny pictures, and its pretty light curtains ironed like surplices, the abbé began a somewhat skeptical and irreverent anecdote, after the fashion of a tale of Erasmus or d’Assoucy.

“Twenty years ago, the Prémontès, or the White Fathers, as we Provençals call them, had fallen into utter destitution. If you had seen their convent in those days, it would have made your heart ache.

Translated by George Burnham Ives. Copyright, 1903, by G. P. Putnam’s Sons.

"The high wall, the Pacôme Tower, were falling in pieces. All around the grass-grown cloisters, the pillars were cracked, the stone saints crumbling in their recesses. Not a stained-glass window whole, not a door that would close. In the courtyards, in the chapels, the wind from the Rhône blew as it blows in Camargue, extinguishing the candles, breaking the leaden sashes of the windows, spilling the water from the holy-water vessels. But the saddest of all was the convent belfry, silent as an empty dove-cote; and the fathers, in default of money to buy a bell, were obliged to ring for matins with clappers of almond-wood!

"Poor White Fathers! I can see them now, in the procession on Corpus Christi, pacing sadly along in their patched hoods, pale and thin, fed on pumpkins and water-melons; and behind them monseigneur the abbé, marching with downcast head, ashamed to exhibit in the sunlight his tarnished crook and his worm-eaten mitre of white wool. The ladies of the fraternity wept with compassion in the ranks, and the stout banner-bearers whispered sneeringly to one another as they pointed to the poor monks:

"The starlings grow thin when they fly in flocks."

"The fact is, the unfortunate White Fathers had reached the point where they asked themselves if they would not do better to fly out into the world and to seek pasturage each for himself.

"Now, one day when this grave question was being discussed in the chapter, the prior was informed that Brother Gaucher desired to be heard in the council. I must say for your information that this Brother Gaucher was the drover of the convent; that is to say, he passed his days waddling from arch to arch through the cloister, driving before him two consumptive cows, which tried to find grass between the cracks of the flagstones. Supported until he was twelve years old by an old madwoman of the Baux country, called Aunt Bégon, then taken in by the monks, the wretched drover had never been able to learn anything except to drive his beasts and to repeat his paternoster; and even that he said in Provençal, for his brain was thick and his mind as dull as a leaden dagger. A fervent Chris-

tian, however, although somewhat visionary, comfortable in his haircloth shirt, and inflicting discipline upon himself, with sturdy conviction, and such arms!

"When they saw him come into the chapter-hall, simple and stupid of aspect, saluting the assemblage with a leg thrown back, prior, canons, steward, and everybody began to laugh. That was always the effect produced by that good-natured face with its grizzly, goatlike beard and its slightly erratic eyes, whenever it appeared anywhere; so that Brother Gaucher was not disturbed thereby.

"'Reverend fathers,' he said in a wheedling voice, playing with his chaplet of olive-stones, 'it is quite true that empty casks make the best music. Just imagine that, by dint of cudgelling my poor brain, which was already so hollow, I believe that I have thought out a way to help us out of our poverty.

"'This is how. You know Aunt Bégon, that worthy woman who took care of me when I was small—God rest her soul, the old hag! she used to sing some very vile songs after drinking.—I must tell you then, reverend fathers, that Aunt Bégon, in her lifetime, knew as much about the mountain herbs as an old Corsican blackbird, and more. In fact, towards the end of her life, she compounded an incomparable elixir by mixing five or six kinds of simples that we picked together in the mountains. That was a good many years ago; but I believe that with the aid of St. Augustine and the permission of our worshipful abbé, I might, by careful search, discover the composition of that mysterious elixir. Then we should only have to bottle it and sell it at a rather high price, to enable the community to get rich as nicely as you please, like our brothers of La Trappe and La Grande—'

"He was not allowed to finish. The prior sprang to his feet and fell upon his neck. The canons seized his hands. The steward, even more deeply moved than all the rest, kissed respectfully the ragged edge of his cowl. Then they all returned to their chairs to deliberate; and the chapter decided on the spot that the cows should be intrusted to

Brother Thrasybule, so that Brother Gaucher might devote himself exclusively to the compounding of his elixir.

"How did the excellent monk succeed in discovering Aunt Bégon's recipe! At the price of what efforts, or what vigils? History does not say. But this much is sure, that after six months, the elixir of the White Fathers was very popular. Throughout the Comtat, in all the Arles country, there was not a farmhouse, not a granary, which had not in the depths of its buttery, amid the bottles of mulled wine and the jars of olives *à la picholine*, a little jug of brown earthenware, sealed with the arms of Provence, and with a monk in a trance on a silver label. Thanks to the popularity of its elixir, the convent of the Prémontrés grew rich very rapidly. The Pacôme Tower was rebuilt. The prior had a new mitre, the church some pretty stained windows; and in the fine openwork of the belfry, a whole legion of bells, large and small, burst forth one fine Easter morning, jingling and chiming with all their might.

"As for Brother Gaucher, that unfortunate lay brother, whose rustic manners amused the chapter so much, was never spoken of in the convent. Henceforth they only knew the Reverend Father Gaucher, a man of brains and of great learning, who lived completely apart from the trivial and multifarious occupations of the cloister, and was shut up all day in his distillery, while thirty monks hunted the mountain for him, seeking fragrant herbs. That distillery which no one, not even the prior, had the right to enter, was an old abandoned chapel, at the end of the canons' garden. The simplicity of the worthy fathers had transformed it into something mysterious and redoubtable; and if by chance some audacious and inquisitive young monk happened to get as far as the rosework of the doorway, he retreated very quickly, terrified by the aspect of Father Gaucher, with his sorcerer's beard, leaning over his furnaces, scales in hand; and all about him retorts of red sandstone, huge alembics, serpentine glasses, a whole strange outfit, flaming as if bewitched, in the red gleam of the stained-glass.

"At nightfall, when the last Angelus rang, the door of

that abode of mystery would open softly, and the father would betake himself to the church for the evening service. You should have seen the welcome that he received when he passed through the monastery! The brethren drew up in two lines for him to pass. They said to one another:

"Hush! he knows the secret!"

"The steward followed him and spoke to him with downcast eyes. Amid all this adulation, the father walked along, mopping his forehead, his broad-brimmed, three-cornered hat placed on the back of his head like a halo, glancing with an air of condescension at the great courtyards full of orange-trees, the blue roofs surmounted by new weather-vanes; and, in the cloister, glaringly white between the gracefully carved pillars, the monks, newly dressed, marching two by two with placid faces.

"They owe all this to me!" the father would say to himself; and every time that thought caused his bosom to swell with pride.

"The poor man was well punished for it, as you will see."

"Imagine that one evening, during the service, he arrived in the church in a state of extraordinary excitement: red-faced, breathless, his hood awry, and so perturbed that when he took his holy-water he wet his sleeves to the elbow. They thought at first that his excitement was due to being late; but when they saw him make profound reverences to the organ and the galleries instead of saluting the main altar, when they saw him rush through the church like a gust of wind, wander about the choir for five minutes looking for his stall, and, when once seated, bow to the right and left with a beatific smile, a murmur of amazement ran through the three naves. From breviary to breviary the monks whispered:

"What can be the matter with our Father Gaucher? What can be the matter with our Father Gaucher?"

"Twice the prior, in his annoyance, struck his crook on the flagstones to enjoin silence. In the choir the psalms continued; but the responses lacked vigour.

"Suddenly, in the very middle of the *Ave verum*, lo and

behold Father Gaucher fell backward in his stall and chanted in a voice of thunder:

"In Paris there is a White Father—
Patatin, patatan, tarabin, taraban."

"General consensation. Everybody rose.

"'Carry him away! he is possessed!' they cried.

"The canons crossed themselves. Monseigneur's crook waved frantically. But Father Gaucher neither saw nor heard anything; and two sturdy monks were obliged to drag him away through the small door of the choir, struggling like one bewitched and continuing his *patatans* and his *tarabans* louder than ever.

"The next morning, at daybreak, the poor wretch was on his knees in the prior's oratory, confessing his sin with a flood of tears.

"'It was the elixir, monseigneur, it was the elixir that took me by surprise,' he said, beating his breast. And seeing him so heartbroken, so penitent, the good prior was deeply moved himself.

"'Come, come, Father Gaucher, calm yourself; all this will dry up like the dew in the sunshine. After all, the scandal was not so great as you think. To be sure there was a song which was a little—however, we must hope that the novices did not hear it. Now, tell me just how the thing happened to you. It was while you were trying the elixir, was it not? Your hand was a little too heavy. Yes, yes, I understand. It was like Brother Schwartz, the inventor of powder; you were the victim of your invention. And tell me, my dear friend, is it really necessary that you should try this terrible elixir upon yourself?'

"'Unluckily, yes, monseigneur. The test-tube, to be sure, gives me the strength and degree of heat of the alcohol; but for the finishing touch, the velvety smoothness, I can trust nothing but my tongue.'

"'Ah! very good. But listen to what I ask. When you taste the elixir thus as a duty, does it taste good to you? Do you enjoy it?'

"'Alas! yes, monseigneur,' said the unhappy father, turning as red as a beet; 'for two evenings now I have found such a bouquet, such an aroma in it! It is certainly the devil who has played me this vile trick. So I have determined only to use the test-tube henceforth. If the liqueur is not as fine, if it is not as smooth as before, so much the worse!'

"'Do nothing of the sort,' interrupted the prior, earnestly. 'We must not take the risk of displeasing our customers. All that you have to do now that you are warned is to be on your guard. Tell me, how much do you need to drink, for your test? Fifteen or twenty drops, is it not? Let us say twenty drops. The devil will be very smart if he can catch you with twenty drops. Moreover, to avert all chance of accident, I excuse you from coming to church henceforth. You will repeat the evening service in the distillery. And now, go in peace, my father, and above all things count your drops carefully.'

"'Alas! the poor father counted his drops to no purpose; the demon had him in his clutch, and he did not let him go.

"The distillery heard some strange services!

"In the daytime everything went well. The father was tranquil enough; he prepared his retorts, his alembics, carefully assorted his herbs—all Provençal herbs, fine and gray, and burned with perfume and sunlight. But at night, when the simples were steeped and the elixir was cooling in great basins of red copper, the poor man's martyrdom began.

"'Seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty.'

"The drops fell from the tube into the silver goblet. Those twenty, the father swallowed at one draught, almost without enjoyment.. It was only the twenty-first that aroused his longing. Oh! that twenty-first drop! To avoid temptation, he would go and kneel at the end of the laboratory and bury himself in his paternosters. But from the still warm liqueur there ascended a wreath of smoke heavily laden with aromatic odours, which came prowling about him, and drew him back towards the basins, whether he would or no. The liqueur was a beautiful golden-green. Leaning over it, with distended nostrils, the father stirred

it gently with his tube, and it seemed to him that he saw, in the sparkling little spangles on the surface of the emerald lake, Aunt Bégon's eyes laughing and snapping as they looked at him.

"Nonsense! just one more drop!"

"And from drop to drop the poor wretch ended by filling his goblet to the brim. Then, at the end of his strength, he would sink down in an easy-chair; and his body relaxed, his eyes half closed, he would enjoy his sin by little sips, murmuring to himself with ecstatic remorse:

"Ah! I am damning myself! I am damning myself!"

"The most terrible part of it was, that in the depths of diabolical elixir, he remembered, by some witchery or other, all Aunt Bégon's naughty songs: 'There were three little gossips, who talked of giving a feast'; or, 'Master André's shepherdess goes to the woods alone'; and always the famous one of the White Fathers: 'Patatin, patatan!'"

"Imagine his confusion the next day when his old neighbours said to him with a sly expression:

"Ha! ha! Father Gaucher, you had grasshoppers in your head when you went to bed last night."

"Then there were tears, despair, fasting, haircloth, and penance. But nothing could prevail against the demon of the elixir; and every evening, at the same hour, the possession began anew.

"Meanwhile, orders rained upon the abbey like a blessing from Heaven. They came from Nîmes, from Aix, from Avignon, from Marseille. From day to day the convent assumed the aspect of a factory. There were packing brothers, labelling brothers, brothers to attend to the correspondence, draymen brothers; the service of God lost a few strokes of the bell now and then, to be sure, but the poor people of the neighbourhood lost nothing, I assure you.

"But one fine Sunday morning, while the steward was reading to the chapter his annual inventory, and the good canons were listening with sparkling eyes and smiling lips, behold Father Gaucher rushed into the midst of the conference, exclaiming:

"'It is all over! I can't stand it any longer! give me back my cows.'

"'What is the matter, pray, Father Gaucher?' asked the prior, who had a shrewd idea what the matter might be.

"'The matter, monseigneur? The matter is that I am laying up for myself an eternity of hell-fire and blows with the pitchfork. The matter is that I am drinking, drinking like a miserable wretch.'

"'But I told you to count your drops.'

"'Count my drops! Oh, yes! I should have to count them by goblets now. Yes, my fathers, I have reached that point. Three flasks an evening. You must see that that cannot last. So let whomsoever you choose make the elixir. May God's fire consume me if I touch it again!'

"The chapter laughed no longer.

"'But you are ruining us, unhappy man!' cried the steward, waving his ledger.

"'Do you prefer that I should damn myself forever?'

"Thereupon the prior rose.

"'My fathers,' he said, putting forth his beautiful white hand, upon which the pastoral ring glistened, 'there is a way to arrange everything. It is at night, is it not, my dear son, that the demon tempts you?'

"'Yes, monsieur prior, regularly every evening. So now, when night comes, a cold sweat takes me, saving your presence, like Capitou's donkey when he saw the saddle coming.'

"'Tis well! be comforted. Henceforth, every evening, at the service, we will repeat in your favour the prayer of St. Augustine, to which plenary indulgence is attached. With that, whatever happens, you are safe. It affords absolution during sin.'

"'Oh well! in that case, thanks, monsieur prior!'

"And, without asking anything more, Father Gaucher returned to his laboratory, as light-hearted as a lark.

"And in truth, from that day forward, every evening at the end of the complines, the officiating father never failed to say:

"'Let us pray for our poor Father Gaucher, who is

sacrificing his soul in the interest of the community. *Oremus, Domine——*'

"And while the prayer ran quivering over those white hoods, prostrate in the shadow of the nave, as a light breeze rushes over the snow, yonder at the other end of the convent, behind the flaming stained-glass of the distillery, Father Gaucher could be heard singing at the top of his lungs:

"In Paris there is a White Father,
Patatin, patatan, tarabin, taraban;
In Paris there is a White Father
Who dances with the nuns,
Trin, trin, trin, in a garden,
Who dances with the——'"

Here the good curé stopped, in dismay.

"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, "suppose my parishioners should hear me!"

FATHER AND SON

(*Hautôt Père et Fils*)

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT

I

THE dogs fastened to the apple trees in the grounds in front of the house were giving tongue at the sight of the game bags carried by the gamekeepers and small boys. It was half farm and half manor house, one of those quasi seignorial country residences, now occupied by large farmers. In the spacious dining-room-kitchen, Hautot Senior and Hautot Junior, M. Bermont, the tax collector, and M. Mondaru, the notary, were eating a mouthful and drinking a glass before going out shooting, for it was the first day of the season.

Hautot Senior, proud of all his possessions, talked boastfully of the game which his guests were going to find on his lands. He was a big Norman, one of those powerful, ruddy men, with large bones, who lift wagon loads of apples on their shoulders. Half peasant, half gentleman, rich, respected, influential, autocratic, he obliged his son César to go through the third form at college so that he might be an educated man, and there he had brought his studies to an end, for fear of his becoming a fine gentleman and paying no attention to the land.

César Hautot, almost as tall as his father, but thinner, was a good son, docile, content with everything, full of admiration, respect, and deference for the wishes and opinions of Hautot Senior.

Translated by A. E. Henderson, B. A., and Mme. Louise Quesada. Copyright, 1911, by P. F. Collier & Sons.

M. Bermont, the tax collector, a stout little man, who showed on his red cheeks a thin network of violet veins resembling the tributaries and the winding courses of rivers on maps, asked:

"And hares—are there any hares?"

Hautot Senior answered:

"As many as you wish, especially in the Puysatier land."

"How shall we set out?" asked the notary, an epicure of a notary, pale and corpulent, with a brand-new hunting costume, belted in, that he had bought at Rouen.

"Well, that way, through the bottoms. We will drive the partridges into the plain, and we can get them there."

And Hautot Senior rose up. They all followed his example, took their guns out of the corners, examined the locks, stamped their feet in order to adjust their boots, which were rather hard, not having become flexible from wear. Then they went out; and the dogs, standing on their hind legs at the ends of their leashes, gave tongue while beating the air with their paws.

They set out toward the bottoms referred to. These consisted of a little valley, or, rather, a long, undulating stretch of poor land, which had on that account remained uncultivated, furrowed with ditches and covered with ferns, an excellent preserve for game.

The sportsmen took up their positions at some distance from each other, Hautot Senior at the right, Hautot Junior at the left, and the two guests in the middle. The game-keeper, and the men carrying the game bags, followed. It was the solemn moment when the first shot is awaited, when the heart beats a little, while the nervous finger keeps feeling the trigger.

Suddenly a shot went off. Hautot Senior had fired. They all stopped, and saw a partridge separate from a covey which had risen, and fall down into a deep ditch under a thick growth of brush. The sportsman, becoming excited, rushed forward with rapid strides, thrusting aside the briars which stood in his path, and disappeared in his turn into the thicket, in quest of his game.

Almost at the same instant, a second shot was heard.

"Ha! ha! the rascal!" exclaimed M. Bermont, "he must have started a hare down there."

They all waited, with their eyes riveted on the mass of brush which their gaze failed to penetrate.

The notary, making a speaking trumpet of his hands, shouted:

"Have you got them?"

Hautot Senior made no response.

Then César, turning toward the gamekeeper, said:

"Just go and assist him, Joseph. We must keep walking in line. We'll wait."

And Joseph, an old stump of a man, lean and knotty, all of whose joints formed protuberances, set off at an easy pace down into the ditch, searching every opening through which a passage could be effected with the cautiousness of a fox. Then, suddenly, he cried:

"Oh! come! come! an accident has occurred."

They all hurried forward, plunging through the briars.

The elder Hautot had fallen on his side, in a faint, with both hands pressed to his abdomen, from which blood trickled through his shooting jacket, torn by a bullet. Letting go of his gun, in order to pick up the dead partridge, he had let the firearm fall, and the second discharge, going off with the shock, had torn open his entrails. They drew him out of the trench, removed his clothes, and saw a frightful wound, through which the intestines protruded. Then, after having ligatured him the best way they could, they brought him back to his own house, and awaited the doctor, who had been sent for, as well as the priest.

When the doctor arrived he gravely shook his head, and, turning toward young Hautot, who was sobbing on a chair, he said:

"My poor boy, this does not look favourable."

But, when the wound was dressed, the wounded man moved his fingers, opened his mouth, then his eyes, cast around him troubled, haggard glances, then appeared to be trying to recall, to understand, and he murmured:

"Ah! good God! this has finished me!"

The doctor held his hand.

"Why, no; why, no; some days of rest merely—it will be nothing."

Hautot returned:

"It has finished me! My abdomen is gashed! I know it well."

Then, all of a sudden:

"I want to talk to my son, if I have time."

Hautot Junior, in spite of himself, shed tears, and kept repeating like a little boy:

"Papa, papa, poor papa!"

But the father, in a firm tone, said:

"Come! stop crying—this is no time for it. I have something to say to you. Sit down there, quite close to me. It will not take long, and I shall be more calm. As for the rest of you, kindly leave us alone for a minute."

They all went out, leaving the father and son together.

As soon as they were alone:

"Listen, son!" he said, "you are twenty-four; one can talk to you. And then there is not such mystery about these matters as we attach to them. You know, do you not, that your mother has been dead seven years, and that I am not more than forty-five years myself, seeing that I was married at nineteen. Is not that true?"

The son faltered:

"Yes, it is true."

"So then your mother is dead seven years, and I have remained a widower. Well! a man like me cannot remain without a wife at thirty-seven, isn't that true?"

The son replied:

"Yes, it is true."

The father, out of breath, very pale, and his face contracted with suffering, went on:

"God! how I suffer! Well, you understand. Man is not made to live alone, but I did not want to take a successor to your mother, since I promised her not to do so. Therefore—you understand?"

"Yes, father."

"Well, I kept a young girl at Rouen, number eighteen, Rue de l'Éperlan, on the third floor, the second door—I am tell-

ing you all this, don't forget—a young girl, who has been very nice to me, loving, devoted, a true woman, eh? You understand, my lad?”

“Yes, father.”

“So then, if I am carried off, I owe something to her, something substantial, that will place her beyond the reach of want. You understand?”

“Yes, father.”

“I tell you that she is a good girl, and, but for you, and the remembrance of your mother, and also because we three lived together in this house, I would have brought her here, and then married her. Listen—listen, my boy—I might have made a will—I haven't done so. I did not wish to do so—for it is not necessary to write down things—things of this sort—it is too damaging to the legitimate children—and then it makes confusion—it ruins every one! Look you—lawyers, there's no need of them—never consult one. If I am rich, it is because I never employed one in all my life. You understand, my son?”

“Yes, father.”

“Listen again—listen attentively! So then, I have made no will—I did not desire to do so—and then I knew you; you have a good heart, you are not covetous, not stingy, and I said to myself that when my end approached I would tell you all about it, and that I would beg of you not to forget the girl. And then, listen again! When I am gone, go and see her at once—and make such arrangements that she may not blame my memory. You have plenty of means. You can spare it—I leave you enough. Listen! You won't find her at home every day in the week. She works at Madame Moreau's in the Rue Beauvoisine. Go there on a Thursday. That is the day she expects me. It has been my day for the past six years. Poor little girl! she will weep! I say all this to you, because I know you so well, my son. One does not tell these things in public, either to the notary or to the priest. They happen—every one knows that—but they are not talked about, save in case of necessity. Then there must be no outsider in the secret, nobody except the

family, because the family consists of one person alone. You understand?"

"Yes, father."

"Do you promise?"

"Yes, father."

"Do you swear it?"

"Yes, father."

"I beg of you, I implore of you, son, do not forget. I insist on this."

"No, father."

"You will go yourself. I want you to make sure of everything."

"Yes, father."

"And then, you will see—you will see what she will explain to you. As for me, I can say no more to you. You have sworn to do it."

"Yes, father."

"That's good, my son. Embrace me. Farewell. I am going to die, I'm sure. Tell them they may come in."

Young Hautot embraced his father, groaning as he did so; then, always docile, he opened the door, and the priest appeared in a white surplice, carrying the holy oils.

But the dying man had closed his eyes and refused to open them again; he refused to answer, and even to show by a sign that he understood.

He had talked enough, this man; he could speak no longer. Besides, he now felt his heart at ease and wanted to die in peace. What need had he to make a confession to this deputy of God, since he had just confessed to his son, who constituted his family?

He received the last rites, was purified, and received absolution, surrounded by his friends and his servants on their bended knees, without any movement of his face indicating that he still lived.

He expired about midnight, after four hours of spasms, which showed that he must have suffered dreadfully.

II

He was buried on Tuesday, the shooting season having

opened on Sunday. On returning home after the funeral César Hautot spent the rest of the day weeping. He scarcely slept that night, and felt so sad on awaking that he asked himself how he could go on living.

However, he kept thinking that, in order to obey his father's dying wish, he must go to Rouen the following day, and see this girl Caroline Donet, who lived at eighteen Rue d'Éperlan the third storey second door. He had muttered to himself this name and address a countless number of times, just as a child repeats a prayer, so that he might not forget them, and he ended by repeating them continually, without thinking, so impressed were they on his mind.

Accordingly, on the following day, about eight o'clock, he ordered Graindorge to be harnessed to the tilbury, and set forth, at the long, swinging pace of the heavy Norman horse, along the high road from Ainville to Rouen. He wore his black frock coat, his tall silk hat, and his trousers strapped under his shoes, and, being in mourning, did not put on his blue dust coat.

He entered Rouen just as it was striking ten o'clock, put up, as he had always done, at the Hotel des Bons-Enfants, in the Rue des Trois-Mares, and submitted to the embraces of the landlord and his wife and their five children, for they had heard the melancholy news; after that, he had to tell them all the particulars of the accident, which caused him to shed tears; to repel all the proffered attentions which they sought to thrust upon him merely because he was wealthy; and to decline even the luncheon they wanted him to partake of, thus wounding their sensibilities.

Then, having wiped the dust off his hat, brushed his coat, and removed the mud stains from his boots, he set forth in search of the Rue de l'Éperlan, without venturing to make inquiries from any one, for fear of being recognized and of arousing suspicion.

At length, unable to find the place, he saw a priest passing by, and, trusting to the professional discretion of the clergy, he questioned the ecclesiastic.

He had only a hundred steps farther to go; it was the second street to the right.

Then he hesitated. Up to that moment he had obeyed, like a mere animal, the expressed wish of the deceased. Now he felt quite agitated, confused, humiliated, at the idea of finding himself—the son—in the presence of this woman who had been his father's sweetheart. All the morality we possess, which lies buried at the bottom of our emotions through centuries of hereditary instruction, all that he had been taught since he had learned his catechism about creatures of evil life, the instinctive contempt which every man entertains toward them, even though he may marry one of them, all the narrow honesty of the peasant in his character, was stirred up within him, and held him back, making him grow red with shame.

But he said to himself:

"I promised the father. I must not break my promise."

So he pushed open the partly opened door of number eighteen, saw a gloomy-looking staircase, ascended three flights, perceived a door, then a second door, saw a bell rope, and pulled it. The ringing, which resounded in the apartment, sent a shiver through his frame. The door was opened, and he found himself face to face with a well-dressed young lady, a brunette with rosy cheeks, who gazed at him with eyes of astonishment.

He did not know what to say to her, and she, who suspected nothing, and who was waiting for the father, did not invite him to come in. They stood looking thus at one another for nearly half a minute, at the end of which she said in a questioning tone:

"Do you want anything, monsieur?"

He falteringly replied:

"I am M. Hautot's son."

She gave a start, turned pale, and stammered out as if she had known him for a long time:

"Monsieur César?"

"Yes."

"And what then?"

"I have come with a message to you from my father."

She exclaimed:

"Oh, my God!" and then drew back so that he might

enter. He shut the door and followed her into the apartment. Then he perceived a little boy of four or five years playing with a cat, seated on the floor in front of a stove, from which rose an odour of food being kept hot.

"Take a seat," she said.

He sat down.

"Well?" she questioned.

He no longer ventured to speak, keeping his eyes fixed on the table which stood in the centre of the room, with three covers laid on it, one of which was for a child, and a bottle of claret that had been opened, and one of white wine that had not been uncorked. He glanced at the chair with its back turned to the fire. That was his father's chair! They were expecting him. That was his bread which he saw at his place, for the crust had been removed on account of Hautot's bad teeth. Then, raising his eyes, he noticed on the wall his father's portrait, the large photograph taken at Paris the year of the exhibition, the same as that which hung above the bed in the sleeping apartment at Ainville.

The young woman again asked:

"Well, Monsieur César?

He kept staring at her. Her face was livid with anxiety, and she waited, her hands trembling with fear.

Then he took courage.

"Well, mam'zelle, papa died on Sunday last just after he had opened the shooting season."

She was so overwhelmed that she did not move. After a silence of a few seconds, she faltered in an almost inaudible tone:

"Oh, it is not possible!"

Then, on a sudden, tears came into her eyes, and, covering her face with her hands, she burst out sobbing.

At that point the little boy turned round, and, seeing his mother weeping, began to roar. Then, realizing that this sudden trouble was brought about by the stranger, he rushed at César, caught hold of his trousers with one hand and with the other hit him with all his strength on the thigh. And César remained bewildered, deeply affected; with this woman mourning for his father on the one hand, and the little boy

defending his mother on the other. He felt their emotion taking possession of him, and his eyes were beginning to fill with tears; so, to recover his self-command, he began to talk:

"Yes," he said, "the accident occurred on Sunday, at eight o'clock——"

And he told all the facts as if she were listening to him, without forgetting a single detail, mentioning the most trivial matters with the minuteness of a countryman. And the child still kept attacking him, kicking his ankles.

When he came to what his father had said about her, she took her hands from her face and said:

"Pardon me! I was not following you; I would like to know—— Would you mind beginning over again?"

He repeated everything in the same words, with pauses and reflections of his own from time to time. She listened eagerly now, perceiving, with a woman's keen sensibility, all the sudden changes of fortune which his narrative implied, and trembling with horror, every now and then exclaiming:

"Oh, my God!"

The little fellow, believing that she had calmed down, ceased beating César, in order to take his mother's hand, and he listened, too, as if he understood.

When the narrative was finished, young Hautot continued:

"Now, we will settle matters together, in accordance with his wishes. I am well off, he has left me plenty of means. I don't want you to have anything to complain about——"

But she quickly interrupted him.

"Oh! Monsieur César, Monsieur César, not today. I am cut to the heart—another time—another day. No, not today. If I accept, listen—it is not for myself—no, no, no, I swear it to you, it is for the child. Besides, this sum will be placed to his account."

Thereupon, César, horrified, guessed the truth, and stammered:

"So then—it is his—the child?"

"Why, yes," she said.

And Hautot Junior gazed at his brother with a confused emotion, intense and painful.

After a long silence, for she had begun to weep afresh, César, quite embarrassed, went on:

"Well, then, Mam'zelle Donet, I am going. When would you wish to talk this over with me?"

She exclaimed:

"Oh! no, don't go! don't go! Don't leave me all alone with Emile. I would die of grief. I have no longer any one, any one but my child. Oh! what wretchedness, what wretchedness, Monsieur César! Come, sit down again. Tell me something more. Tell me what he did at home all the week."

And César resumed his seat, accustomed to obey.

She drew over another chair for herself in front of the stove, where the dishes had all this time been heating, took Émile upon her knees, and asked César a thousand questions about his father—questions of an intimate nature, which made him feel, without reasoning on the subject, that she had loved Hautot with all the strength of her weak woman's heart.

And, by the natural sequence of his ideas—which were rather limited in number—he recurred once more to the accident, and set about telling the story over again, with all the same details.

When he said:

"He had a hole in his stomach that you could put your two fists into," she gave a sort of shriek, and her eyes again filled with tears.

Then, seized by the contagion of her grief, César began to weep, too, and as tears always soften the fibres of the heart, he bent over Émile, whose forehead was close to his own mouth, and kissed him.

The mother, recovering her breath, murmured:

"Poor child, he is an orphan now!"

"And so am I," said César.

And they were silent.

But suddenly the practical instinct of the housewife, accustomed to think of everything, revived in the young woman's breast.

"You have perhaps had nothing to eat all the morning, Monsieur César."

"No, mam'zelle."

"Oh! you must be hungry. You will eat a morsel."

"Thank you," he said, "I am not hungry; I have had too much sorrow."

She replied:

"In spite of sorrow, we must live. You will not refuse to let me get something for you! And then you will remain a little longer. When you are gone, I don't know what will become of me."

He yielded after some further resistance, and, sitting down with his back to the fire, facing her, he ate a plateful of tripe, which had been drying up in the gravy, and drank a glass of red wine. But he would not allow her to uncork the bottle of white wine. He several times wiped the mouth of the little boy, who had smeared all his chin with gravy.

As he rose to take his leave, he asked:

"When would you like me to come back to talk about this matter, Mam'zelle Donet?"

"If it is all the same to you, say next Thursday, Monsieur César. In that way I shall not waste my time, as I always have my Thursdays free."

"That will suit me—next Thursday."

"You will come to luncheon, won't you?"

"Oh! As to that I can't promise."

"The reason I suggested it is, that people can chat better when they are eating. One has more time, too."

"Well, be it so. About twelve o'clock, then."

And he took his departure, after he had again kissed little Emile, and pressed Mademoiselle Donet's hand.

III

THE week appeared long to César Hautot. He had never before lived alone, and the isolation seemed to him unendurable. Till now, he had lived at his father's side, just like his shadow, followed him into the fields, superintended the execution of his orders, and if they were separated for

a short time they again met at dinner. They spent the evenings smoking their pipes together, sitting opposite each other, chatting about horses, cows, or sheep; and the grip of their hands when they rose in the morning was a manifestation of deep family affection.

Now César was alone. He went mechanically about his autumn duties on the farm, expecting any moment to see his father's tall, energetic outline rising up at the end of a level field. To kill time, he visited his neighbours, told about the accident to all who had not heard of it, and sometimes repeated it to the others. Then, having exhausted his occupations and his reflections, he would sit down at the side of the road, asking himself whether this kind of life was going to last forever.

He frequently thought of Mademoiselle Donet. He liked her. He considered her thoroughly respectable, a gentle, good young woman, as his father had said. Yes, undoubtedly she was a good girl. He resolved to act handsomely toward her, and to give her two thousand francs a year, settling the capital on the child. He even experienced a certain pleasure in thinking that he was going to see her on the following Thursday and arrange this matter with her. And then the thought of this brother, this little chap of five, who was his father's son, worried him, annoyed him a little, and, at the same time, pleased him. He had, as it were, a family in this youngster, sprung from a clandestine alliance, who would never bear the name of Hautot—a family which he might take or leave, just as he pleased, but which reminded him of his father.

And so, when he saw himself on the road to Rouen on Thursday morning, borne along by Graindorge with his measured trot, he felt his heart lighter, more at peace than it had been since his bereavement.

On entering Mademoiselle Donet's apartment, he saw the table laid as on the previous Thursday, with the sole difference that the crust had not been removed from the bread. He pressed the young woman's hand, kissed Emile on both cheeks, and sat down, more or less as if he were in his own house, although his heart was full. Mademoiselle Donet

seemed to him a little thinner and paler. She must have grieved sorely. She now wore an air of constraint in his presence, as if she understood what she had not felt the week before under the first blow of her misfortune, and she exhibited an excessive deference toward him, a mournful humility, and made touching efforts to please him, as if to repay by her attentions the kindness he had manifested toward her. They were a long time at luncheon, talking over the business which had brought him there. She did not want so much money. It was too much. She earned enough to live on herself, but she only wished that Emile might find a few sous awaiting him when he grew up. César was firm, however, and even added a gift of a thousand francs for herself, for the expenses of mourning.

When he had taken his coffee, she asked:

"Do you smoke?"

"Yes—I have my pipe."

He felt in his pocket. Good heavens! He had forgotten it! He was becoming quite distressed about it when she offered him a pipe of his father's that had been put away in a closet. He took it up in his hand, recognized it, smelled it, spoke of its quality in a tone of emotion, filled it with tobacco, and lighted it. Then, he set Emile astride his knee, and gave him a ride, while she removed the tablecloth, and piled the soiled dishes under the sideboard, intending to wash them as soon as he was gone.

About three o'clock he rose regretfully, quite annoyed at the thought of having to go.

"Well! Mademoiselle Donet," he said, "I wish you good evening, and am delighted to have found you like this."

She remained standing before him, blushing, much affected, and gazed at him while she thought of the father.

"Shall we not see one another again?" she said.

He replied simply:

"Why, yes, mademoiselle, if it gives you pleasure."

"Certainly, Monsieur César. Will next Thursday suit you?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Donet."

"You will come to luncheon, of course?"

"Well—if you are so kind as to invite me, I can't refuse."

"It is understood, then, Monsieur César—next Thursday, at twelve, the same as today."

"Thursday at twelve, Mademoiselle Donet!"

THE PIECE OF STRING

(*La Ficelle*)

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT

ON all the roads about Goderville the peasants and their wives were coming towards the town, for it was market day. The men walked at easy gait, the whole body thrown forward with every movement of their long, crooked legs, misshapen by hard work, by the bearing down on the plough which at the same time causes the left shoulder to rise and the figure to slant; by the mowing of the grain, which makes one hold his knees apart in order to obtain a firm footing; by all the slow and laborious tasks of the fields. Their starched blue blouses, glossy as if varnished, adorned at the neck and wrists with a bit of white stitchwork, puffed out about their bony chests like balloons on the point of taking flight, from which protruded a head, two arms, and two feet.

Some of them led a cow or a calf at the end of a rope. And their wives, walking behind the beast, lashed it with a branch still covered with leaves, to hasten its pace. They carried on their arms great baskets, from which heads of chickens or of ducks were thrust forth. And they walked with a shorter and quicker step than their men, their stiff, lean figures wrapped in scanty shawls pinned over their flat breasts, their heads enveloped in a white linen cloth close to the hair, with a cap over all.

Then a *char-à-bancs* passed, drawn by a jerky-paced nag, with two men seated side by side shaking like jelly, and a

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woman behind, who clung to the side of the vehicle to lessen the rough jolting.

On the square at Goderville there was a crowd, a medley of men and beasts. The horns of the cattle, the high hats, with a long, hairy nap, of the wealthy peasants, and the head-dresses of the peasant women, appeared on the surface of the throng. And the sharp, shrill, high-pitched voices formed an incessant, uncivilized uproar, over which soared at times a roar of laughter from the powerful chest of a sturdy yokel, or the prolonged bellow of a cow fastened to the wall of a house.

There was an all-pervading smell of the stable, of milk, of the dunghill, of hay, and of perspiration,—that acrid, disgusting odour of man and beast peculiar to country people.

Master Hauchecorne, of Bréauté, had just arrived at Goderville, and was walking towards the square, when he saw a bit of string on the ground. Master Hauchecorne, economical like every true Norman, thought that it was well to pick up everything that might be of use; and he stooped painfully, for he suffered with rheumatism. He took the piece of slender cord from the ground, and was about to roll it up carefully, when he saw Master Malandain, the harness-maker, standing in his doorway and looking at him. They had formerly had trouble on the subject of a halter, and had remained at odds, being both inclined to bear malice. Master Hauchecorne felt a sort of shame at being seen thus by his enemy, fumbling in the mud for a bit of string. He hurriedly concealed his treasure in his blouse, then in his breeches'-pocket; then he pretended to look on the ground for something else, which he did not find; and finally he went on towards the market, his head thrust forward, bent double by his pains.

He lost himself at once in the slow-moving, shouting crowd, kept in a state of excitement by the interminable bargaining. The peasants felt of the cows, went away, returned, sorely perplexed, always afraid of being cheated, never daring to make up their minds, watching the vendor's

eye, striving incessantly to detect the tricks of the man and the defect in the beast.

The women, having placed their great baskets at their feet, took out their fowls, which lay on the ground, their legs tied together, with frightened eyes and scarlet combs.

They listened to offers, adhered to their prices, short of speech and impassive of face; or else, suddenly deciding to accept the lower price offered, they would call out to the customer as he walked slowly away:

"All right, Mast' Anthime. You can have it."

Then, little by little, the square became empty, and when the Angelus struck midday those who lived too far away to go home betook themselves to the various inns.

At Jourdain's the common room was full of customers, as the great yard was full of vehicles of every sort—carts, cabriolets, *char-à-bancs*, tilburys, unnamable carriages, shapeless, patched, with their shafts reaching heavenward like arms, or with their noses in the ground and their tails in the air.

The vast fireplace, full of clear flame, cast an intense heat against the backs of the row on the right of the table. Three spits were revolving, laden with chickens, pigeons, and legs of mutton: and a delectable odour of roast meat, and of gravy dripping from the browned skin, came forth from the hearth, stirred the guests to merriment, and made their mouths water.

All the aristocracy of the plough ate there, at Mast' Jourdain's, the inn-keeper and horse-trader—a shrewd rascal who had money.

The dishes passed and were soon emptied, like the jugs of yellow cider. Every one told of his affairs, his sales, and his purchases. They inquired about the crops. The weather was good for green stuffs, but a little wet for wheat.

Suddenly a drum rolled in the yard, in front of the house. In an instant everybody was on his feet, save a few indifferent ones; and they all ran to the door and windows, with their mouths still full and napkins in hand.

Having finished his long tattoo, the public crier shouted in a jerky voice, making his pauses in the wrong places:

"The people of Goderville, and all those present at the market are informed that between—nine and ten o'clock this morning on the Beuzeville—road, a black leather wallet was lost, containing five hundred—francs, and business papers. The finder is requested to carry it to—the mayor's office at once, or to Master Fortuné Houlbrèque of Manneville. A reward of twenty francs will be paid."

Then he went away. They heard once more in the distance the muffled roll of the drum and the indistinct voice of the crier.

Then they began to talk about the incident, reckoning Master Houlbrèque's chance of finding or not finding his wallet.

And the meal went on.

They were finishing their coffee when the corporal of gendarmes appeared in the doorway.

He inquired:

"Is Master Hauchecorne of Bréauté here?"

Master Hauchecorne, who was seated at the farther end of the table, answered:

"Here I am."

And the corporal added:

"Master Hauchecorne, will you be kind enough to go to the mayor's office with me? Monsieur the mayor would like to speak to you."

The peasant, surprised and disturbed, drank his *petit verre* at one swallow, rose, and even more bent than in the morning, for the first steps after each rest were particularly painful, he started off, repeating:

"Here I am, here I am."

And he followed the brigadier.

The mayor was waiting for him, seated in an arm-chair. He was the local notary, a stout, solemn-faced man, given to pompous speeches.

"Master Hauchecorne," he said, "you were seen this morning, on the Beuzeville road, to pick up the wallet lost by Master Houlbrèque of Manneville."

The rustic, dumfounded, stared at the mayor, already

alarmed by this suspicion which had fallen upon him, although he failed to understand it.

"I, I—I picked up that wallet?"

"Yes, you."

"On my word of honor, I didn't ever so much as see it."

"You were seen."

"They saw me, me? Who was it saw me?"

"Monsieur Malandain, the harness-maker."

Thereupon the old man remembered and understood; and flushing with anger, he cried:

"Ah! he saw me, did he, that sneak? He saw me pick up this string, look, m'sieu' mayor."

Adn, fumbling in the depths of his pocket, he produced the little piece of cord.

But the mayor was incredulous and shook his head.

"You won't make me believe, Master Hauchecorne, that Monsieur Malandain, who is a man deserving of credit, mistook this string for a wallet."

The peasant, in a rage, raised his hand, spit to one side to pledge his honor, and said:

"It's God's own truth, the sacred truth, all the same, m'sieu' mayor. I say it again, by my soul and my salvation."

"After picking it up," rejoined the mayor, "you hunted a long while in the mud, to see if some piece of money hadn't fallen out."

The good man was suffocated with wrath and fear.

"If any one can tell—if any one can tell lies like that, to ruin an honest man! If any one can say——"

To no purpose did he protest; he was not believed.

He was confronted with Monsieur Malandain, who repeated and maintained his declaration. They insulted each other for a whole hour. At his own request, Master Hauchecorne was searched. They found nothing on him. At last the mayor, being sorely perplexed, discharged him, but warned him that he proposed to inform the prosecuting attorney's office and to ask for orders.

The news had spread. On leaving the mayor's office, the old man was surrounded and questioned with serious or

bantering curiosity, in which, however, there was no trace of indignation. And he began to tell the story of the string. They did not believe him. They laughed.

He went his way, stopping his acquaintances, repeating again and again his story and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out, to prove that he had nothing.

They said to him:

"You old rogue, *va!*"

And he lost his temper, lashing himself into a rage, feverish with excitement, desperate because he was not believed, at a loss what to do, and still telling his story.

Night came. He must needs go home. He started with three neighbours, to whom he pointed out the place where he had picked up the bit of string: and all the way he talked of his misadventure.

During the evening he made the circuit of the village of Bréauté, in order to tell everybody about it. He found none but incredulous listeners.

He was ill over it all night.

The next afternoon, about one o'clock, Marius Paumelle, a farm-hand employed by Master Breton, a farmer of Ymauville, restored the wallet and its contents to Master Houllbrèque of Manneville.

The man claimed that he had found it on the road; but, being unable to read, he had carried it home and given it to his employer.

The news soon became known in the neighbourhood; Master Hauchecorne was informed of it. He started out again at once, and began to tell his story, now made complete by the dénouement. He was triumphant.

"What made me feel bad," he said, "wasn't so much the thing itself, you understand, but the lying. There's nothing hurts you so much as being blamed for lying."

All day long he talked of his adventure; he told it on the roads to people who passed; at the wine-shop to people who were drinking; and after church on the following Sunday. He even stopped strangers to tell them about it. His mind was at rest now, and yet something embarrassed him, although he could not say just what it was. People

seemed to laugh while they listened to him. They did not seem convinced. He felt as if remarks were made behind his back.

On Tuesday of the next week, he went to market at Goderville, impelled solely by the longing to tell his story.

Malandain, standing in his doorway, began to laugh when he saw him coming. Why?

He accosted a farmer from Criquetot, who did not let him finish, but poked him in the pit of his stomach, and shouted in his face: "Go on, you old fox!" Then he turned on his heel.

Master Hauchecorne was speechless, and more and more disturbed. Why did he call him "old fox"?

When he was seated at the table, in Jourdain's inn, he set about explaining the affair once more.

A horse-trader from Montivilliers called out to him:

"Nonsense, nonsense, you old dodger! I know all about your string!"

"But they've found the wallet!" faltered Hauchecorne.

"None of that, old boy; there's one who finds it, and there's one who carries it back. I don't know just how you did it, but I understand you."

The peasant was fairly stunned. He understood at last. He was accused of having sent the wallet back by a confederate, an accomplice.

He tried to protest. The whole table began to laugh.

He could not finish his dinner, but left the inn amid a chorus of jeers.

He returned home, shamefaced and indignant, suffocated by wrath, by confusion, and all the more cast down because, with his Norman cunning, he was quite capable of doing the thing with which he was charged, and even of boasting of it as a shrewd trick. He had a confused idea that his innocence was impossible to establish, his craftiness being so well known. And he was cut to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

Thereupon he began once more to tell of the adventure, making the story longer each day, adding each time new arguments, more forcible protestations, more solemn oaths,

which he devised and prepared in his hours of solitude, his mind being wholly engrossed by the story of the string. The more complicated his defence and the more subtle his reasoning, the less he was believed.

"Those are a liar's reasons," people said behind his back.

He realized it; he gnawed his nails, and exhausted himself in vain efforts.

He grew perceptibly thinner.

Now the jokers asked him to tell the story of *The Piece of String* for their amusement, as a soldier who has seen service is asked to tell about his battles. His mind, attacked at its source, grew feebler.

Late in December he took to his bed.

In the first days of January he died, and in the delirium of the death-agony, he protested his innocence, repeating:

"A little piece of string—a little piece of string—see, here it is, m'sieu' mayor."

1884.

A QUESTION OF DIPLOMACY

(*Le Coup d'État*)

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT

NEWS of the disaster of Sedan has just reached Paris. The Republic had been proclaimed and the entire country gasped at the beginning of the madness which lasted until after the Commune. From one end of the land to the other, men played at being soldiers.

Hat-makers were colonels with the functions of generals; revolvers and knives were displayed about pacific bellies enveloped with red sashes; little bourgeois, who had become warriors by accident, commanded battalions of bawling volunteers and swore like truck-drivers to give themselves a commanding presence.

The mere fact of holding arms, of handling automatic rifles, distracted these people who had hitherto handled only scales, and made them, without reason, redoubtable to the first comer. The innocent were executed to prove that they knew how to kill; and in prowling about the country still undefiled by the Prussians they shot the stray dogs, the cows ruminating in peace, and sick horses grazing in the meadows.

Everybody considered himself called upon to play a great military rôle. The cafés of the smallest villages, with their horde of shopkeepers in uniform, resembled barracks or ambulances.

The borough of Caneville still ignored the distracting news of the army from the capital; but for a month an

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extreme agitation was shaking it—the rival factions stood face to face.

The mayor, the Viscount de Varnetot, a small, thin, little man, already old, and a legitimist who for ambitious motives had but recently rallied to the Empire, saw a determined adversary in the person of Dr. Massarel, a fat, florid man, chief of the Republic party of the district, an elder in the headquarters of the Masonic lodge, president of the Society of Agriculture, and organiser of the rural militia, which was to save the country.

In fifteen days he had found the means of persuading sixty-three married men—fathers of families—to defend the country; these were prudent peasants and tradesmen of the borough, and he drilled them every morning in the square of the town-hall.

When the mayor by chance came to the parish building, the commandant Massarel, loaded with pistols, passed proudly before his troops, saber in hand, and made his people shout, "*Vive la patrie!*"

And it was noticed that this cry agitated the little viscount, who doubtless saw in this a threat, a challenge, and at the same time an odious reminder of the great Revolution.

On the morning of December 5th, as the postman brought the paper, the doctor, in uniform, his revolver on the table, was engaged in consultation with a couple of old farmers, one of whom had been afflicted with varicose veins for seven years, but had waited till his wife also had them before consulting a doctor.

Monsieur Massarel opened the newspaper, turned pale, rose suddenly, and, raising his arms to heaven with an exalted gesture, began to bawl at the top of his voice before the two frightened rustics:

"Long live the Republic! Long live the Republic! Long live the Republic!"

Then he fell back into an arm-chair, faint with emotion.

And as the peasant continued, "It began just like ants crawling up and down my legs," the doctor broke in with: "Shut up! As if I had time to attend to your drivell! The

Republic has been proclaimed; the Emperor is a prisoner; France is saved. Long live the Republic!" And, running to the door, he cried: "Céleste, quick! Céleste!"

The terror-stricken servant ran up; he talked so rapidly that he sputtered:

"My boots, my saber, my cartridge-pouch, and the Spanish dagger that is on the table at my bedside. Hurry!"

And as the obstinate peasant, taking advantage of an instant of silence again took up the thread of his narrative, "It became like little pockets that hurt me as I walked," the exasperated doctor screamed: "Good God! will you shut up! If you had washed your feet this wouldn't have happened!"

Then, seizing him by the collar, he shouted in his face, "You glorified ass; don't you realise that we're in a Republic?"

But professional sentiment calmed him at once and he pushed the astounded couple outside, repeating: "Come back to-morrow; come back to-morrow my friends. I haven't the time to-day."

Even while he equipped himself from head to foot he again gave a series of orders to his servant:

"Run to Lieutenant Picart and to Sub-Lieutenant Pommel and tell them I expect them here immediately. Send me Torchebeuf, too, with his drum, quick! Quick!"

And when Céleste had left he pulled himself together preparatory to surmounting the difficulties of the situation.

The three men arrived together, in working-clothes. The commandant, who had expected to see them in uniform, received a shock.

"The devil! Then you know nothing? The Emperor is a prisoner; the Republic has been proclaimed. We must act. My position is delicate, I may even say perilous." He mused for a few seconds before the astonished faces of his subordinates, and continued: "We must act and not hesitate. In similar instances minutes are worth hours. Everything depends upon the promptness of decisions. You, Picart, go and find the priest and order him to ring the alarm-bell to assemble the population, whom I am going

to inform. You, Torchebeuf, beat the call to arms in the entire parish as far as the hamlets of Gersaie and Salmaire. You, Pommel, dress promptly in your uniform—nothing but the tunic and the *képi*. We will occupy the town-hall together and summon Monsieur de Varnetot to surrender his executive power to me. Have you understood?"

"Yes."

"Execute this and be prompt. I shall accompany you as far as your house, Pommel, as we are operating together."

Five minutes later the commandant and his subordinates, armed to the teeth, appeared on the square just at the moment when the little Viscount de Varnetot, with legs gaitered as if for a hunting-party, his shot-gun on his shoulder, emerged with rapid steps from another street, followed by his three guards, in green tunics, their knives at the hip and their rifles slung over the shoulder.

As the doctor stopped, dumfounded, the four men penetrated into the town-hall, the door of which closed after them.

"We have been forestalled," muttered the doctor. "We must now wait for reinforcements. There's nothing to be done for a quarter of an hour."

Lieutenant Picart reappeared. "The priest has refused to obey," he said. "He has even locked himself in the church with the beadle and the Swiss."

And from the other side of the square, opposite the white and sealed town-hall, the church, mute and gloomy, showed its great door of oak, fortified with iron mountings.

Then, as the perplexed inhabitants put their noses to the windows or appeared on the thresholds of the houses, the drum suddenly rolled and Torchebeuf appeared, beating with fury the three precipitated beats of the call to arms. He crossed the square at quick march and then disappeared in the road leading to the fields.

Then the commandant drew his saber and advanced to about half the distance between the two buildings where the enemy had barricaded himself; then, waving his weapon above his head, he bellowed with all the force of his lungs:

"Long live the Republic! Death to the traitors!" Then he returned to his officers.

The butcher, the baker, and the druggist, uneasy, hung up their shutters and closed their shops. Only the grocer remained open.

Yet little by little the men of the militia arrived, diversely dressed and all capped with the black *képi* and a red stripe, the *képi* constituting the uniform of the corps. They were armed with old, rusty guns, those old guns that had hung for thirty years above the mantelpieces of kitchens, and they greatly resembled a detachment of rural constables.

When he had about thirty around him, the commandant in a few words put them in touch with events. Then, turning to his general staff, he said, "Now let us act."

The inhabitants collected, stared, and gaped.

The doctor had soon devised a plan of action. "Lieutenant Picart, you will advance beneath the windows of the town hall and summon Monsieur de Varnetot, in the name of the Republic, to surrender the town-hall to me."

But the lieutenant, a master mason, refused. "You certainly are a foxy one. To have me get plugged with a bullet. Thanks. You know those fellows in there are good shots. Run your own errands."

The commandant reddened. "I order you to go in the name of discipline."

The lieutenant openly revolted. "You'll order me oftener than I'll go to get my face smashed without knowing why."

The notables, assembled in a neighbouring group, began to laugh, and one of them cried: "You right, Picart. This isn't the time to do it."

"Cowards!" muttered the doctor, and, leaving his saber and revolver in the hands of a soldier, he advanced at a slow pace, his eyes fixed on the windows, expecting to see a rifle come out of them, aimed at him. When he was only a few steps from the building the doors at either end, which gave access to the two schools, opened, and there issued a troop of little urchins—boys and girls—who began to play in the deserted square and squabbled like a flock of geese about the doctor, who could not make himself heard.

As soon as the last pupils left, the doors closed. The main body of the youngsters at last dispersed and the commandant called in a strong voice:

"Monsieur de Varnetot!"

A window on the first floor opened. Monsieur de Varnetot appeared.

The commandant continued: "Monsieur, you know that great events have altered the aspects of the government. That which you represented has ceased to be. That which I represent has come into power. Under these unhappy but decisive circumstances I have come to summon you in the name of the Republic to surrender to me the functions you were invested with by the preceding powers."

Monsieur de Varnetot replied: "Monsieur le docteur, I am mayor of Caneville, elected by competent authority, and I shall remain mayor of Caneville as long as I have not been dismissed or replaced by an order of my superiors. As mayor I am at home in the town-hall, and there I remain. Moreover, try to make me leave it!" And he closed the window.

The commandant turned to his troops. But before venturing an explanation he eyed Lieutenant Picart from head to foot. "You're a brave fellow, you are. A famous milk-sop—the disgrace of the army. I degrade you from your rank."

"As if I give a damn," the lieutenant answered; and he went away to mingle with the murmuring group of inhabitants.

The doctor hesitated. What was he to do? Order an attack? But would the men charge? Then, again, had he the authority? An idea occurred to him. He ran to the telegraph-office, which faced the town-hall on the other side of the square, and sent off three despatches: to the lord-mayor of the republican government at Paris, to the prefect of the Seine Inférieure at Rouen, to the new republican sub-prefect of Dieppe.

He set forth the situation; dwelt on the danger incurred by the parish remaining in the hands of a former monarchist

mayor, offered his devoted services, asked for orders, and signed his name, following it with all his titles.

Then, taking ten francs from his pocket, he returned to his army corps. "Here, my friends, go and eat and have a drink, and leave only a detachment of ten men here so that nobody can leave the town-hall."

But ex-Lieutenant Picart, who was speaking with the watchmaker, heard, and began to chuckle:

"By gad! if they leave, that'll be the chance to enter. Unless they do I can't see you inside there."

The doctor did not answer, and went to lunch. In the afternoon he stationed pickets around the entire parish as if it were threatened by an attack. He passed several times before the doors of the town-hall and the church without noticing anything suspicious. One might have thought these buildings empty.

The butcher, the baker, and the druggist opened their shops.

News mongers prattled in the lodging-houses. If the Emperor was a prisoner there was treachery somewhere. They did not know which republic had returned.

Night fell. Toward nine o'clock the doctor noiselessly approached the entrance of the district building alone, persuaded that his adversary had left to go to bed, and as he was preparing to break in the door with a pickaxe a loud voice the voice of a guard suddenly demanded:

"Who's there?"

And Monsieur Massarel beat a retreat as fast as his legs would carry him.

Daybreak found the situation unaltered. The militia in arms occupied the square. All the inhabitants had united about these troops, awaiting a solution, and from neighbouring villages others began to arrive to see the sights.

The doctor, realising that his reputation was at stake, resolved to finish things in one way or another; and he was about to come to some kind of a resolution—an energetic one, assuredly—when the door of the telegraph-office opened and the little servant of the directress appeared, holding two papers in her hand.

At first she made for the commandant and handed him one of the despatches; then, crossing the deserted middle of the square, intimidated by all the eyes fixed on her, she went with mincing steps and bowed head to rap lightly on the barricaded door of the town-hall, as if she were ignorant that an armed faction was hiding there.

The door opened; the hand of a man received the message, and the young girl returned, all flushed and ready to cry for having been stared at by the entire country.

The doctor in a vibrating voice demanded, "A little silence if you please!" And when the populace had become silent he proudly began: "Here is the communication I have received from the government." And lifting his voice he read:

"The mayor is dismissed. Kindly advise at earliest possible moment. Will receive later instructions.

"For the sub-prefect,

"SAPIN, Councilor."

He had triumphed. His heart beat with joy; his hands trembled; but Picart, his former subordinate, called to him from a neighbouring group:

"That is all very well so far, but the others haven't left, and your paper makes you look funny."

Monsieur Massarel turned pale. If the others did not leave it was certain that he would have to advance. It was not only his right, but his duty. And he looked anxiously to the town-hall, hoping to see the door open and his adversary withdraw.

The door remained closed. What should he do? The crowd increased and closed in about the militia. They began to laugh.

One thought, above all, tortured the doctor. If he ordered an attack it would be necessary to march at the head of his men; and as with his death all controversy would cease, it would be at him that Morsieur de Varnetot and his three guards would shoot. And they were good shots, very good—Picart had just repeated this to him. He turned to Pommel, for an idea had illuminated him:

"Go quick and ask the druggist to lend me a napkin and a stick."

The lieutenant hurried.

He was going to make a flag of truce—a white flag, the sight of which might gladden the former mayor.

Pommel returned with the requested linen and a broom-handle. With pieces of string this standard was devised, which Monsieur Massarel seized with both hands and again advanced toward the town-hall, holding it before him.

When he was opposite the door he again called, "Monsieur de Varnetot."

The door suddenly opened and Monsieur de Varnetot appeared on the threshold with his three guards.

The doctor recoiled with an instinctive movement; then, saluting his enemy with courtesy, and strangled by emotion, he began: "I come, monsieur, to communicate to you the instructions I have received."

The viscount, without returning his salute, replied, "I withdraw, monsieur, but rest assured that it is neither from fear nor from obedience to the odious government which has usurped power." And, emphasising each word, he declared: "I do not wish to appear to be serving the Republic for a single day. That is all."

Massarel, speechless, did not reply, and Monsieur de Varnetot, dropping into a brisk pace, disappeared in a corner of the square, still followed by his escort.

Then the doctor, bewildered with pride, returned toward the crowd. As soon as he was near enough to make himself heard he cried: "Hurrah! Hurrah! The Republic triumphs all along the line!"

No emotion was manifested.

The doctor continued: "The people are free; you are free, independent. Be proud!"

The inert villagers stared at him without a glimmer of pride in their eyes.

It was his turn to survey them, disgusted at their indifference, and to search for something he might say which would be the means of striking a great blow, of electrifying

the pacific country and of fulfilling his mission of the initiator.

But an inspiration came to him, and, turning to Pommel, he said, "Lieutenant, go and find the bust of the ex-Emperor which is in the debating-room of the Municipal Council, and bring it to me with a chair."

The man soon reappeared, carrying on his right shoulder a Bonaparte of plaster and holding in his left hand a straw-bottomed chair.

Monsieur Massarel went forward to meet him, took the chair, put it on the ground, placed the bust upon it, and, retreating for a few paces, addressed it in a sonorous voice:

"Tyrant! tyrant! Here you are fallen—fallen in the dirt—fallen in the mire! The expiring fatherland gasped under your heel! Avenging Destiny has struck you! Defeat and shame cling to you! You fall vanquished, a prisoner of the Prussians, and on the ruins of your crumbling empire the young and radiant Republic, taking up your broken sword, rises . . ."

He awaited the applause. Not a cry, no clapping of hands burst forth. The bewildered peasants were silent, and the bust with the mustache extending past the cheeks on either side, the immovable bust, well-groomed like a hairdresser's sign, seemed to look at Monsieur Massarel with its smile of plaster—an ineffaceable and mocking smile.

Thus they stood face to face—Napoleon on his chair and the doctor standing at three paces from him. The commandant was seized with anger. What was he to do to move these stolid people and to definitely win this victory of opinion?

His hand, by chance, wandered to his stomach and encountered the butt of his revolver. Words of inspiration came to him no more. He drew the weapon, took two steps, and, point-blank, fired at the deposed monarch.

The ball drilled a small, black hole in the forehead like a spot—hardly anything. He had missed his effect. Monsieur Massarel took a second shot, which made a second hole, then a third, and, without stopping, he let go the rest.

The forehead of Napoleon flew into white dust, but the

eyes, the nose, and the fine points of the mustache remained intact.

In exasperation the doctor overturned the chair with a punch, and, placing his foot on the remains of the bust in the posture of a conqueror, he turned to the astounded public. "Let all traitors perish thus!" But as no enthusiasm had yet manifested itself, and as the spectators seemed to be stupid with astonishment, the commandant called to the men of the militia, "You may now return to your homes." And he himself made for his own home as if pursued.

His servant, as soon as he appeared, told him that some patients had been waiting for more than three hours in his office, and he hurried in.

They were the two peasants with the varicose veins, who had returned just after dawn, obstinate and patient.

And the old man at once began his explanation: "It began just like ants crawling up and down my legs. . . ."

SAC-AU-DOS

(*Sac-au-dos*)

By JORIS-KARL HUYSMANS

AS soon as I finished my studies my parents deemed it useful to my career to cause me to appear before a table covered with green cloth and surmounted by the living busts of some old gentleman who interested themselves in knowing whether I had learned enough of the dead languages to entitle me to the degree of Bachelor.

The test was satisfactory. A dinner to which all my relations, far and near, were invited, celebrated my success, affected my future, and ultimately fixed me in the law. Well, I passed my examination and got rid of the money provided for my first year's expenses with a blonde girl who, at times, pretended to be fond of me.

I frequented the Latin Quarter assiduously and there I learned many things; among others to take an interest in those students who blew their political opinions into the foam of their beer, every night, then to acquire a taste for the works of George Sand and of Heine, of Edgard Quinet, and of Henri Mürger.

The psychophysical moment of silliness was upon me.

That lasted about a year; gradually I ripened. The electoral struggles of the closing days of the Empire left me cold; I was the son neither of a Senator nor a proscribed and I had but to outlive, no matter what the régime, the traditions of mediocrity and wretchedness long since adopted by my family. The law pleased me but little. I

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thought that the *Code* had been purposely maldirected in order to furnish certain people with an opportunity to wrangle, to the utmost limit, over the smallest words; even to-day it seems to me that a phrase clearly worded can not reasonably bear such diverse interpretation.

I was sounding my depths, searching for some state of being that I might embrace without too much disgust, when the late Emperor found one for me; he made me a soldier through the maladroitness of his policy.

The war with Prussia broke out. To tell the truth I did not understand the motives that made that butchery of armies necessary. I felt neither the need of killing others nor of being killed by them. However that may be, enrolled in the *Garde mobile* of the Seine, I received orders, after having gone in search of an outfit, to visit the barber and to be at the barracks in the Rue Lourcine at seven o'clock in the evening.

I was at the place punctually. After roll-call part of the regiment swarmed out of the barrack gates and emptied into the street. Then the sidewalks raised a shout and the gutters ran.

Crowding one against another, workmen in blouses, workmen in tatters, soldiers strapped and gaitered, without arms, they scanned to the clink of glasses the Marseillaise over which they shouted themselves hoarse with their voices out of time. Heads geared with képis* of incredible height and ornamented with vizors fit for blind men and with tin cockades of red, white and blue, muffled in blue-black jackets with madder-red collars and cuffs, breached in blue linen pantaloons with a red stripe down the side, the militia of the Seine kept howling at the moon before going forth to conquer Prussia. That was a deafening uproar at the wine shops, a hubbub of glasses, cans and shrieks, cut into here and there by the rattling of a window shaken by the wind. Suddenly the roll of the drum muffled all that clamor; a new column poured out of the barracks; there was carousing and tipling indescribable. Those soldiers who were drinking in the wine shops shot now out into the streets,

* Military hats.

followed by their parents and friends who disputed the honor of carrying their knapsacks; the ranks were broken; it was a confusion of soldiers and citizens; mothers wept, fathers, more contained, sputtered wine, children frisked for joy and shrieked patriotic songs at the top of their shrill voices.

They crossed Paris helter-skelter by the flashes of lightning that whipped the storming clouds into white zigzags. The heat was overpowering, the knapsack was heavy; they drank at every corner of the street; they arrived at last at the railway station of Aubervilliers. There was a moment of silence broken by the sound of sobbing, dominated again by a burst of the Marseillaise, then they stalled us like cattle in the cars. "Good night, Jules! may we meet soon again! Be good! Above all write to me!" They squeezed hands for a last time, the train whistled, we had left the station. We were a regular shovelful of fifty men in that box that rolled away with us. Some were weeping freely, jeered at by the others who, completely lost in drink, were sticking lighted candles into their provisions and bawling at the top of their voices: "Down with Badinguet! and long live Rochefort!"*

Others, in a corner by themselves, stared silently and sullenly at the broad floor that kept vibrating in the dust. All at once the convoy makes a halt—I got out. Complete darkness—twenty-five minutes after midnight.

On all sides stretch the fields, and in the distance lighted up by sharp flashes of lightning, a cottage, a tree sketch their silhouette against a sky swollen by the tempest. Only the grinding and rumbling of the engine is heard, whose clusters of sparks flying from the smokestack scatter like a bouquet of fireworks the whole length of the train. Every one gets out, goes forward as far as the engine, which looms up in the night and becomes huge. The stop lasted quite two hours. The signal disks flamed red, the engineer was waiting for them to reverse. They turn; again we get back into the wagons, but a man who comes up on the run and swinging a lantern, speaks a few words to the conductor,

* Badinguet, nickname given to Napoleon III; Henri Rochefort, anti-Napoleon journalist and agitator.

who immediately backs the train into a siding where we remain motionless. Not one of us knows where we are. I descend again from the carriage, and sitting on an embankment, I nibble at a bit of bread and drink a drop or two, when the whirl of a hurricane whistles in the distance, approaches, roaring and vomiting fire, and an interminable train of artillery passed at full speed, carrying along horses, men, and cannon whose bronze necks sparkle in a confusion of light. Five minutes after we take up our slow advance, again interrupted by halts that grow longer and longer. The journey ends with daybreak, and leaning from the car window, worn out by the long watch of the night, I look out upon the country that surrounds us: a succession of chalky plains, closing in the horizon, a band of pale green like the colour of a sick turquoise, a flat country, gloomy, meagre, the beggarly Champagne Pouilleuse!

Little by little the sun brightens, we, rumbling on the while, end, however, by getting there! Leaving at eight o'clock in the evening, we were delivered at three o'clock of the afternoon of the next day. Two of the militia had dropped by the way, one who had taken a header from the top of the car into the river, the other who had broken his head on the ledge of a bridge. The rest, after having pillaged the hovels and the gardens, met along the route wherever the train stopped, either yawned, their lips puffed out with wine, and their eyes swollen, or amused themselves by throwing from one side of the carriage to the other, branches of shrubs and hen-coops which they had stolen.

The disembarking was managed after the same fashion as the departure. Nothing was ready; neither canteen, nor straw, nor coats, nor arms, nothing, absolutely nothing. Only tents full of manure and of insects, just left by the troops off for the frontier. For three days we live at the mercy of Mourmelon.* Eating a sausage one day and drinking a bowl of café-au-lait the next, exploited to the utmost by the natives, sleeping, no matter how, without straw and without covering. Truly such a life was not calculated to give us a taste for the calling they had inflicted on us.

* A suburb of Chalons.

Once in camp, the companies separated; the labourers took themselves to the tents of their fellows; the bourgeois did the same. The tent in which I found myself was not badly managed, for we succeeded in driving out by argument of wine the two fellows, the native odour of whose feet was aggravated by a long and happy neglect.

One or two days passed. They made us mount guard with the pickets, we drank a great deal of eau-de-vie, and the drink-shops of Mourmelon were full without let, when suddenly Canrobert* passed us in review along the front line of battle. I see him now on his big horse, bent over the saddle, his hair flying, his waxed mustaches in a ghastly face. A mutiny was breaking out. Deprived of everything, and hardly convinced by that marshal that we lacked nothing, we growled in chorus when he talked of repressing our complaints by force: "Ran, plan, plan, a hundred thousand men afoot, to Paris, to Paris!"

Canrobert grew livid, and shouted, planting his horse in the midst of us. "Hats off to a marshal of France!" Again a howl goes up from the ranks; then turning bridle, followed in confusion by his staff officers, he threatened us his finger, whistling between his separated teeth. "You shall pay dear for this, gentlemen from Paris!"

Two days after this episode, the icy water of the camp made me so sick that there was urgent need of my entering the hospital. After the doctor's visit, I buckle on my knapsack, and under guard of a corporal, here I am going limping along, dragging my legs and sweating under my harness. The hospital is gorged with men; they send me back. I then go to one of the nearest military hospitals; a bed stands empty; I am admitted. I put down my knapsack at last, and with the expectation that the major would forbid me to move, I went out for a walk in the little garden which connected the set of buildings. Suddenly there issued from the door a man with bristling beard and bulging eyes. He plants his hands in the pockets of a long dirt-brown cloak, and shouts out from the distance as soon as he sees me:

* Canrobert, a brave and distinguished veteran, head of the 21st Corps of the Army of the Rhine.

"Hey you, man! What are you doing over here?" I approach, I explain to him the motive that brings me. He thrashes his arms about and bawls:

"Go in again! You have no right to walk about in this garden until they give you your costume."

I go back into the room, a nurse arrives and brings me a great military coat, pantaloons, old shoes without heels, and a cap like a nightcap. I look at myself, thus grotesquely dressed, in my little mirror. Good Heavens, what a face and what an outfit! With my haggard eyes and my sallow complexion, with my hair cut short, and my nose with the bumps shining; with my long mouse-gray coat, my pants stained russet, my great heelless shoes, my colossal cotton cap, I am prodigiously ugly. I could not keep from laughing. I turn my head toward the side of my bed neighbour, a tall boy of Jewish type, who is sketching my portrait in a notebook. We become friends at once; I tell him to call me Eugène Lejantel; he responds by telling me to call him Francis Emnot; we recall to each other this and that painter; we enter into a discussion of esthetics and forget our misfortune. Night arrives; they portion out to us a dish of boiled meat dotted*black with a few lentils, they pour us out brimming cups of coco-clairet, and I undress, enchanted at stretching myself out in a bed without keeping my clothes and my shoes on.

The next morning I am awakened at about six o'clock by a great fracas at the door and a clatter of voices. I sit up in bed, I rub my eyes, and I see the gentleman of the night before, still dressed in his wrapper, brown the colour of cachou, who advances majestically, followed by a train of nurses. It was the major. Scarcely inside, he rolls his dull green eyes from right to left and from left to right, plunges his hands in his pockets and bawls:

"Number One, show your leg—your dirty leg. Eh, it's in a bad shape, that leg, that sore runs like a fountain; lotion of bran and water, lint, half-rations, a strong licorice tea. Number Two, show your throat—your dirty throat. It's getting worse and worse, that throat; the tonsils will be cut out to-morrow."

"But, doctor——"

"Eh, I am not asking anything from you, am I? Say one word and I'll put you on a diet."

"But, at least——"

"Put that man on a diet. Write: diet, gargles, strong licorice tea."

In that vein he passed all the sick in review, prescribing for all, the syphilitics and the wounded, the fevered and the dysentery patients his strong licorice tea. He stopped in front of me, stared into my face, tore off my covering, punched my stomach with his fist, ordered albuminated water for me, the inevitable tea; and went out snorting and dragging his feet.

Life was difficult with the men who were about us. There were twenty-one in our sleeping quarters. At my left slept my friend, the painter; on my right, a great devil of a trumpeter, with face pocked like a sewing thimble and yellow as a glass of bile. He combined two professions, that of cobbler by day and a procurer of girls by night. He was, in other respects, a comical fellow who frisked about on his hands, or on his head, telling you in the most naïve way in the world the manner in which he expedited at the toe of his boot the work of his menials, or intoned in a touching voice sentimental songs:

"I have cherished in my sorrow—ow
But the friendship of a swallow—ow."

I conquered his good graces by giving him twenty sous to buy a liter of wine with, and we did well in not being on bad terms with him, for the rest of our quarters—composed in part of attorneys of the Rue Maubuée—were well disposed to pick a quarrel with us.

One night, among others, the 15th of August, Francis Emonot threatened to box the ears of two men who had taken his towel. There was a formidable hubbub in the dormitory. Insults rained, we were treated to "*roule-en-coule et de duchesses*." Being two against nineteen, we were in a fair way of getting a regular drubbing, when the

bugler interfered, took aside the most desperate and coaxed them into giving up the stolen object. To celebrate the reconciliation which followed this scene, Francis and I contributed three francs each, and it was arranged that the bugler with the aid of his comrades should try to slip out of the hospital and bring back some meat and wine.

The light had disappeared from the major's window, the druggist at last extinguished his, we climb over the thicket, examine our surroundings, caution the men who are gliding along the walls not to encounter the sentinels on the way, mount on one another's shoulders and jump off into the field. An hour later they came back laden with victuals; they pass them over and reenter the dormitory with us; we suppress the two night lamps, light candle-ends stuck on the floor, and around my bed in our shirts we form a circle. We had absorbed three or four liters of wine and cut up the best part of a leg of mutton, when a great clattering of shoes is heard; I blow out the candle stubs, by the grace of my shoe, and every one escapes under the beds. The door opens; the major appears, heaves a formidable "Good Heavens!" stumbles in the darkness, goes out and comes back with a lantern and the inevitable train of nurses. I profit by the moment to disperse the remains of the feast; the major crosses the dormitory at a quick step, swearing, threatening to take us all into custody and to put us in stocks.

We are convulsed with laughter under our coverings; a trumpet-flourish blazes from the other side of the dormitory. The major puts us all under diet; then he goes out, warning us that we shall know in a few minutes what metal he is made of.

Once gone, we vie with each other in doing our worst; flashes of laughter rumble and crackle. The trumpeter does a handspring in the dormitory, one of his friends joins him, a third jumps on his bed as on a springboard and bounces up and down, his arms balancing, his shirt flying; his neighbour breaks into a triumphant cancan; the major enters abruptly, orders four men of the line he has brought with him to seize the dancers, and announces to us that he is

going to draw up a report and send it to whom it may concern.

Calm is restored at last; the next day we get the nurses to buy us some eatables. The days run on without further incident. We are beginning to perish of ennui in this hospital, when, one day, at five o'clock, the doctor bursts into the room and orders us to put on our campaign clothes and to buckle on our knapsacks.

We learn ten minutes later that the Prussians are marching on Chalons.

A gloomy amazement reigns in the quarters. Until now we have had no doubts as to the outcome of passing events. We knew about the too celebrated victory of Sarrebrück, we do not expect the reverses which overwhelm us. The major examines every man; not one is cured, all had been too long gorged with licorice water and deprived of care. Nevertheless, he returns to their corps the least sick, he orders others to lie down completely dressed, knapsacks in readiness. Francis and I are among these last. The day passes, the night passes. Nothing. But I have the colic continually and suffer. At last, at about nine o'clock in the morning, appears a long train of mules with "cacolets,"* and led by "tringlots."† We climb two by two into the baskets. Francis and I were lifted onto the same mule, only, as the painter was very fat and I very lean, the arrangement see-sawed; I go up in the air while he descends under the belly of the mule, who, dragged by the head, and pushed from behind, dances and flings about furiously. We trot along in a whirlwind of dust, blinded, bewildered, jolted, we cling to the bar of the cacolet, shut our eyes, laugh and groan. We arrive at Chalons more dead than alive; we fall to the gravel like jaded cattle, then they pack us into the cars and we leave Chalons to go—where? No one knows.

It is night; we fly over the rails. The sick are taken from the cars and walked up and down the platforms. The engine whistles, slows down and stops in a railway station—that

* Panier seats used in the French army to transport the wounded.

† Tringlots are the soldiers detailed for this duty.

of Reims, I suppose, but I can not be sure. We are dying of hunger, the commissary forgot but one thing: to give us bread for the journey. I got out. I see an open buffet. I run for it, but others are there before me. They are fighting as I come up. Some were seizing bottles, others meat, some bread, some cigars. Half-dazed but furious, the restaurant-keeper defends his shop at the point of a spit. Crowded by their comrades, who come up in gangs, the front row of militia throw themselves onto the counter, which gives way, carrying in its wake the owner of the buffet and his waiters. Then followed a regular pillage; everything went, from matches to toothpicks. Meanwhile the bell rings and the train starts. Not one of us disturbs himself, and while sitting on the walk, I explain to the painter how the tubes work, the mechanism of the bell. The train backs down over the rails to take us aboard. We ascend into our compartments again, and we pass in review the booty we had seized. To tell the truth, there was little variety of food. Pork-butchers' meat and nothing but pork-butcher's meat! We had six strings of Bologna sausages flavoured with garlic, a scarlet tongue, two sausages, a superb slice of Italian sausage, a slice in silver stripe, the meat all of an angry red, mottled white; four liters of wine, a half-bottle of cognac, and a few candle ends. We stick the candle ends into the neck of our flasks, which swing, hung by strings to the sides of the wagon. There was, thus, when the train jolted over a switch, a rain of hot grease which congealed almost instantly into great platters, but our coats had seen many another.

We began our repast at once, interrupted by the going and coming of those of the militia who kept running along the footboards the whole length of the train, and knocked at our window-panes and demanded something to drink. We sang at the top of our voices, we drank, we clinked glasses. Never did sick men make so much noise or romp so on a Court of Miracles; the cripples jumped with jointed legs, those whose intestines were burning soaked them in bumpers of cognac, the one-eyed opened their eyes, the fevered capered about, the sick throats bellowed and tipped; it was unheard of!

This disturbance ends in calming itself. I profit by the lull to put my nose out of the window. There was not a star there, not even a tip of the moon; heaven and earth seem to make but one, and in that intensity of inky blackness, the lanterns winked like eyes of different colours attached to the metal of the disks. The engineer discharged his whistle, the engine puffed and vomited its sparks without rest. I reclose the window and look at my companions. Some were snoring, others disturbed by the jolting of the box, gurgled and swore in their sleep, turning over incessantly, searching for room to stretch their legs, to brace their heads that nodded at every jolt.

By dint of looking at them, I was beginning to get sleepy when the train stopped short and woke me up. We were at a station; and the station-master's office flamed like a forge fire in the darkness of the night. I had one leg numbed, I was shivering from cold, I descend to warm up a bit. I walk up and down the platform, I go to look at the engine, which they uncouple, and which they replace by another, and walking by the office I hear the bills and the tic-tac of the telegraph. The employee, with back turned to me, was stooping a little to the right in such a way that from where I was placed, I could see but the back of his head and the tip of his nose, which shone red and beaded with sweat, while the rest of his figure disappeared in the shadow thrown by the screen of a gas-jet.

They invite me to get back into the carriage, and I find my comrades again, just as I had left them. That time I went to sleep for good. For how long did my sleep last? I don't know—when a great cry woke me up: "Paris! Paris!" I made a dash for the doorway. At a distance, against a band of pale gold, stood out in black the smoke-stacks of factories and workshops. We were at Saint-Denis; the news ran from car to car. Every one was on his feet. The engine quickened its pace. The Gare du Nord looms up in the distance. We arrive there, we get down, we throw ourselves at the gates. One part of us succeeds in escaping, the others are stopped by the employees of the railroad and by the troops; by force they make us remount

into a train that is getting up steam, and here we are again, off for God knows where!

We roll onward again all day long. I am weary of looking at the rows of houses and trees that spin by before my eyes; then, too, I have the colic continually and I suffer. About four o'clock of the afternoon, the engine slackens its speed, and stops at a landing-stage where awaits us there an old general, around whom sports a flock of young men, with headgear of red képis, breached in red and shod with boots with yellow spurs. The general passes us in review and divides us into two squads; the one for the seminary, the other is directed toward the hospital. We are, it seems, at Arras. Francis and I form part of the first squad. They tumble us into carts stuffed with straw, and we arrive in front of a great building that settles and seems about to collapse into the street. We mount to the second story to a room that contains some thirty beds; each one of us unbuckles his knapsack, combs himself, and sits down. A doctor arrives.

"What is the trouble with you?" he asks of the first.

"A carbuncle."

"Ah! and you?"

"Dysentery."

"Ah! and you?"

"A bubo."

"But in that case you have not been wounded during the war?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Very well! You can take up your knapsacks again. The archbishop gives up the beds of his seminarists only to the wounded."

I pack into my knapsack again all the knick-knacks that I had taken out, and we are off again, willy-nilly, for the city hospital. There was no more room there. In vain the sisters contrive to squeeze the iron beds together, the wards are full. Worn out by all these delays, I seize one mattress, Francis takes another, and we go and stretch ourselves in the garden on a great grass-plot.

The next day I have a talk with the director, an affable

and charming man. I ask permission for the painter and for me to go out into the town. He consents; the door opens; we are free! We are going to dine at last! To eat real meat, to drink real wine! Ah, we do not hesitate; we make straight for the best hotel in town. They serve us there with a wholesome meal. There are flowers there on the table, magnificent bouquets of roses and fuchias that spread themselves out of the glass vases. The waiter brings in a roast that drains into a lake of butter; the sun himself comes to the feast, makes the covers sparkle and the blades of the knives, sifts his golden dust through the carafes, and playing with the pommard that gently rocks in the glasses, spots with a ruby star the damask cloth.

Oh, sacred joy of the guzzlers! My mouth is full and Francis is drunk! The fumes of the roast mingle with the perfume of the flowers; the purple of the wine vies in gorgeousness with the red of the roses. The waiter who serves us has the air of folly and we have the air of gluttons, it is all the same to us! We stuff down roast after roast, we pour down bordeaux upon burgundy, chartreuse upon cognac. To the devil with your weak wines and your thirty-sixes,* which we have been drinking since our departure from Paris! To the devil with those whimsicalities without name, those mysterious pot-house poisons with which we have been so crammed to leanness for nearly a month! We are unrecognizable; our once peaked faces redden like a drunkard's, we get noisy, with noise in the air we cut loose. We run all over the town that way.

Evening arrives; we must go back, however. The sister who is in charge of the old men's ward says to us in a small flute-like voice.

"Soldiers, gentlemen, you were very cold last night, but you are going to have a good bed."

And she leads us into a great room where three night lamps, dimly lighted, hang from the ceiling. I have a white bed, I sink with delight between the sheets that still smell fresh with the odour of washing. We hear nothing but the breathing or the snoring of the sleepers. I am quite warm,

* Brandy of thirty-six degrees.

my eyes close, I know no longer where I am, when a prolonged chuckling awakes me. I open one eye and I perceive at the foot of my bed an individual who is looking down at me. I sit up in bed. I see before me an old man, tall, lean, his eyes haggard, lips slobbering into a rough beard. I ask what he wants of me. No answer! I cry out: "Go away! Let me sleep!"

He shows me his fist. I suspect him to be a lunatic. I roll up my towel, at the end of which I quietly twist a knot; he advances one step; I leap to the floor; I parry the fist-cuff he aims at me, and with the towel I deal him a return blow full in the left eye. He sees thirty candles, he throws himself at me; I draw back and let fly a vigorous kick in the stomach. He tumbles, carrying with him a chair that rebounds; the dormitory is awakened; Francis runs up in his shirt to lend me assistance; the sister arrives; the nurses dart upon the madman, whom they flog and succeed with great difficulty in putting in bed again. The aspect of the dormitory was eminently ludicrous; to the gloom of faded rose, which the dying night lamps had spread around them, succeeded the flaming of three lanterns. The black ceiling, with its rings of light that danced above the burning wicks, glittered now with its tints of freshly spread plaster. The sick men, a collection of Punch and Judies without age, had clutched the piece of wood that hung at the end of a cord above their heads, hung on to it with one hand, and with the other made gestures of terror. At that sight my anger cools, I split with laughter, the painter suffocates, it is only the sister who preserves her gravity and succeeds by force of threats and entreaties in restoring order in the room.

Night came to an end, for good or ill; in the morning at six o'clock the rattle of a drum assembled us, the director called off the roll. We start for Rouen. Arrived in that city, an officer tells the unfortunate man in charge of us that the hospital is full and can not take us in. Meanwhile we have an hour to wait. I throw my knapsack down into a corner of the station, and though my stomach is on fire, we are off, Francis and I, wandering at random, in ecstasies before the church of Saint-Ouen, in wonder before the old

houses. We admire so much and so long that the hour had long since passed before we even thought of looking for the station again. "It's a long time since your comrades departed," one of the employees of the railroad said to us; "they are in Evreux." The devil! The next train doesn't go until nine o'clock—Come, let's get some dinner!"

When we arrived at Evreux, midnight had come. We could not present ourselves at a hospital at such an hour; we would have the appearance of malefactors. The night is superb, we cross the city and we find ourselves in the open fields. It was the time of haying, the piles were in stacks. We spy out a little stack in a field, we hollow out there two comfortable nests, and I do not know whether it is the reminiscent odour of our couch or the penetrating perfume of the woods that stirs us, but we feel the need of airing our defunct love affairs. The subject was inexhaustible. Little by little, however, words become fewer, enthusiasm dies out, we fall asleep. "Sacre bleu!" cries my neighbour, as he stretches himself. "What time can it be?" I awake in turn. The sun will not be late in rising, for the great blue curtain is laced at the horizon with a fringe of rose. What misery! It will be necessary now to go knock at the door of the hospital, to sleep in wards impregnated with that heavy smell through which returns, like an obstinate refrain, the acrid flower of powder of iodoform! All sadly we take our way to the hospital again. They open to us but alas! one only of us is admitted, Francis—and I, they send me on to the lyceum. This life is no longer possible, I meditate an escape, the house surgeon on duty comes down into the courtyard. I show him my law-school diploma; he knows Paris, the Latin Quarter. I explain to him my situation. "It has come to an absolute necessity." I tell him "that either Francis comes to the lyceum or that I go to rejoin him at the hospital." He thinks it over, and in the evening, coming close to my bed, he slips these words into my ear: "Tell them to-morrow morning that your sufferings increase." The next day, in fact, at about seven o'clock, the doctor makes his appearance; a good, an excellent man, who had but two faults; that of odourous teeth

and that of desiring to get rid of his patients at any cost. Every morning the following scene took place:

"Ah, ha! the fine fellow," he cries, "what an air he has! good colour, no fever. Get up and go take a good cup of coffee; but no fooling, you know! don't go running after the girls; I will sign for you your *Exeat*; you will return to-morrow to your regiment."

Sick or not sick, he sent back three a day. That morning he stops in front of me and says:

"Ah! saperlotte, my boy, you look better!"

I exclaim that never have I suffered so much.

He sounds my stomach. "But you are better," he murmurs; "the stomach is not so hard." I protest—he seems astonished, the interne then says to him in an undertone:

"We ought perhaps to give him an injection; and we have here neither syringe nor stomach-pump; if we send him to the hospital——?"

"Come, now, that's an idea!" says the good man, delighted at getting rid of me, and then and there he signs the order for my admission. Joyfully I buckle on my knapsack, and under guard of one of the servants of the lyceum I make my entrance at the hospital. I find Francis again! By incredible good luck the St. Vincent corridor, where he sleeps, in default of a room in the wards, contains one empty bed next to his. We are at last reunited! In addition to our two beds, five cots stretch, one after the other, along the yellow glazed walls. For occupants they have a soldier of the line, two artillerymen, a dragoon, and a hussar. The rest of the hospital is made up of certain old men, crack-brained and weak-bodied, some young men, rickety or bandy-legged, and a great number of soldiers—wrecks from MacMahon's army—who, after being floated on from one military hospital to another, had come to be stranded on this bank. Francis and I, we are the only ones who wear the uniform of the Seine militia; our bed neighbours were good enough fellows; one, to tell the truth, quite as insignificant as another; they were, for the most part, the sons of peasants or farmers called to serve under the flag after the declaration of war.

While I am taking off my vest, there comes a sister, so frail, so pretty that I can not keep from looking at her; the beautiful big eyes! the long blonde lashes! the pretty teeth! She asks me why I have left the lyceum; I explain to her in round-about phrases how the absence of a forcing pump caused me to be sent back from the college. She smiles gently and says to me: "Ah, sir soldier, you could have called the thing by name; we are used to everything." I should think she was used to everything, unfortunate woman, for the soldiers constrained themselves but little in delivering themselves of their indiscreet amenities before her. Yet never did I see her blush. She passed among them mute, her eyes lowered, seeming not to hear the coarse jokes retailed around her.

Heavens! how she spoiled me! I see her now in the morning, as the sun breaks on the stone floor the shadows of the window bars, approaching slowly from the far end of the corridor, the great wings of her bonnet flapping at her face. She comes close to my bed with a dish that smokes, and on the edge of which glistens her well-trimmed finger nail. "The soup is a little thin to-day," she says with her pretty smile, "so I bring you some chocolate. Eat it quick while it's hot!"

In spite of the care she lavished upon me, I was bored to death in that hospital. My friend and I, we had reached that degree of brutishness that throws you on your bed, trying to kill in animal drowsiness the long hours of insupportable days. The only distractions offered us consisted in a breakfast and a dinner composed of boiled beef, water-melon, prunes, and a finger of wine—the whole of not sufficient quantity to nourish a man.

Thanks to my ordinary politeness toward the sisters and to the prescription labels that I wrote for them, I obtained fortunately a cutlet now and then and a pear picked in the hospital orchard. I was, then, on the whole, the least to be pitied of all the soldiers packed together, pell-mell, in the wards, but during the first days I could not succeed even in swallowing the meagre morning dole. It was inspection hour, and the doctor chose that moment to perform his

operations. The second day after my arrival he ripped a thigh open from top to bottom; I heard a piercing cry; I closed my eyes, not enough, however, to avoid seeing a red stream spurt in great jets on to the doctor's apron. That morning I could eat no more. Little by little, however, I grew accustomed to it; soon I contented myself by merely turning my head away and keeping my soup.

In the meanwhile the situation became intolerable. We tried, but in vain, to procure newspapers and books; we were reduced to masquerading, to donning the hussar's vest for fun. This puerile fooling quickly wore itself out, and stretching ourselves every twenty minutes, exchanging a few words, we dive our heads into the bolsters.

There was not much conversation to be drawn from our comrades. The two artillerymen and the hussar were too sick to talk. The dragoon swore by the name of heaven, saying nothing, got up every instant, enveloped in his great white mantle, and went to the wash-bowls, whose sloppy condition he reported by means of his bare feet. There were some old saucepans lying about in which the convalescents pretended to cook, offering their stew in jest to the sisters.

There remained, then, only the soldier of the line: an unfortunate grocer's clerk, father of a child, called to the army, stricken constantly by fever, shivering under his bed-clothes.

Squatting, tailor-fashion, on our bed, we listen to him recount the battle in which he was picked up. Cast out near Froeschwiller, on a plain surrounded with woods, he had seen the red flashes shoot by in bouquets of white smoke, and he had ducked, trembling, bewildered by the cannonading, wild with the whistling of the balls. He had marched, mixed in with the regiments, through the thick mud, not seeing a single Prussian, not knowing in what direction they were, hearing on all sides groans, cut by sharp cries, then the ranks of the soldiers placed in front of him, all at once turned, and in the confusion of flight he had been, without knowing how, thrown to the ground. He had picked himself up and had fled, abandoning his gun and knapsack, and at last, worn out by the forced marches endured for eight

days, undermined by fear, weakened by hunger, he had rested himself in a trench. He had remained there dazed, inert, stunned by the roar of the bombs, resolved no longer to defend himself, to move no more; then he thought of his wife, and, weeping, demanded what he had done that they should make him suffer so; he picked up, without knowing why, the leaf of a tree, which he kept, and which he had about him now, for he showed it to us often, dried and shriveled at the bottom of his pockets.

An officer had passed meanwhile, revolver in hand, had called him "coward," and threatened to break his head if he did not march. He had replied: "That would please me above all things. Oh, that this would end!" But the officer at the very moment he was shaking him on to his feet was stretched out, the blood bursting, spurting from his neck. Then fear took possession of him; he fled and succeeded in reaching a road far off, overrun with the flying, black with troops, furrowed by gun-carriages whose dying horses broke and crushed the ranks.

They succeeded at last in putting themselves under shelter. The cry of treason arose from the groups. Old soldiers seemed once more resolved, but the recruits refused to go on. "Let them go and be killed," they said, indicating the officers; "that's their profession. As for me I have children; it's not the State that will take care of them if I die!" And they envied the fate of those who were slightly wounded and the sick who were allowed to take refuge in the ambulances.

"Ah, how afraid one gets, and, then, how one holds in the ear the voices of men calling for their mothers and begging for something to drink," he added, shivering all over. He paused, and, looking about the corridor with an air of content, he continued: "It's all the same, I am very happy to be here; and then, as it is, my wife can write to me," and he drew from his trousers pocket some letters, saying with satisfaction: "The little one has written, look!" and he pointed out at the foot of the paper under his wife's laboured handwriting, some up-and-down strokes forming a

dictated sentence, where there were some "I kiss papas" in blots of ink.

We listened twenty times at least to that story, and we had to suffer during mortal hours the repetitions of that man, delighted at having a child. We ended by stopping our ears and by trying to sleep so as not to hear him any more.

This deplorable life threatened to prolong itself, when one morning Francis, who, contrary to his habit, had been prowling around the whole of the evening before in the courtyard, says to me: "I say, Eugène, come out and breathe a little of the air of the fields." I prick my ears. "There is a field reserved for lunatics," he continued; "that field is empty; by climbing onto the roofs of the outhouses, and that is easy, thanks to the gratings that ornament the windows, we can reach the coping of the wall; we jump and we tumble into the country. Two steps from the wall is one of the gates of Evreux. What do you say?"

I say—I say that I am quite willing to go out, but how shall we get back?

"I do not know anything about that; first let us get out, we will plan afterward. Come, get up, they are going to serve the soup; we jump the wall after."

I get up. The hospital lacked water, so much so that I was reduced to washing in the seltzer water which the sister had had sent to me. I take my siphon, I mark the painter who cries fire, I press the trigger, the discharge hits him full in his face; then I place myself in front of him, I receive the stream in my beard, I rub my nose with the lather, I dry my face. We are ready, we go downstairs. The field is deserted; we scale the wall; Francis takes his measure and jumps. I am sitting astride the coping of the wall, I cast a rapid glance around me; below, a ditch and some grass, on the right one of the gates of the town; in the distance, a forest that sways and shows its rents of golden red against a band of pale blue. I stand up; I hear a noise in the court; I jump; we skirt the walls; we are in Evreux!

Shall we eat? Motion adopted.

Making our way in search of a resting-place, we per-

ceive two little women wagging along. We follow them and offer to breakfast with them; they refuse; we insist; they answer no less gently; we insist again; they say yes. We go home with them, with a meat-pie, bottles of wine, eggs, and a cold chicken. It seems odd to us to find ourselves in a light room hung with paper spotted with lilac blossoms and green leaves; there are at the case-ments damask curtains of red currant colour, a mirror over the fireplace, an engraving representing a Christ tormented by the Pharisees. Six chairs of cherry wood and a round table with an oilcloth showing the kings of France, a bedspread with eiderdown of pink muslin. We set the table, we look with greedy eye at the girls moving about. It takes a long time to get things ready, for we stop them for a kiss in passing; for the rest, they are ugly and stupid enough. But what is that to us? It's so long since we have scented the mouth of woman!

I carve the chicken; the corks fly, we drink like toppers, we eat like ogres. The coffee steams in the cups; we gild it with cognac; my melancholy flies away, the punch kindles, the blue flames of the Kirschwasser leap in the salad bowl, the girls giggle, their hair in their eyes. Suddenly four strokes ring out slowly from the church tower. It is four o'clock. And the hospital! Good heavens, we had forgotten it! I turn pale. Francis looks at me in fright, we tear ourselves from the arms of our hostesses, we go out at double quick.

"How to get in?" says the painter.

Alas! we have no choice; we shall get there scarcely in time for supper. Let's trust to the mercy of heaven and make for the great gate!

We get there; we ring; the sister *conciërge* is about to open the door for us and stands amazed. We salute her, and I say loud enough to be heard by her:

"I say, do you know, they are not very amiable at that commissariat; the fat one specially received us only more or less civilly."

The sister breathes not a word. We run at a gallop for the messroom; it was time, I heard the voice of Sister

Angèle who was distributing the rations. I went to bed as quickly as possible, I covered with my hand a spot my beauty had given me the length of my neck; the sister looks at me, finds in my eyes an unwonted sparkle, and asks with interest: "Are your pains worse?"

I reassure her and reply: "On the contrary, sister, I am better; but this idleness and this imprisonment are killing me."

When I speak of the appalling ennui that is trying me, sunk in this company, in the midst of the country, far from my own people, she does not reply, but her lips close tight, her eyes take on an indefinable expression of melancholy and of pity. One day she said to me in a dry tone: "Oh, liberty's worth nothing to you," alluding to a conversation she had overheard between Francis and me, discussing the charming allurements of Parisian women; then she softened and added with her fascinating little moue: "You are really not serious, Mr. Soldier."

The next morning we agreed, the painter and I, that as soon as the soup was swallowed, we would scale the wall again. At the time appointed we prowled about the field; the door is closed. "Bast, worse luck!" says Francis, "*En avant!*" and he turns toward the great door of the hospital. I follow him. The sister in charge asks where we are going. "To the commissariat." The door opens, we are outside.

Arrived at the grand square of the town, in front of the church, I perceive, as we contemplate the sculptures of the porch, a stout gentleman with a face like a red moon bristling with white mustaches, who stares at us in astonishment. We stare back at him, boldly, and continue on our way. Francis is dying of thirst; we enter a café, and, while sipping my demi-tasse, I cast my eyes over the local paper, and I find there a name that sets me dreaming. I did not know, to tell the truth, the person who bore it, but that name recalled to me memories long since effaced. I remembered that one of my friends had a relation in a very high position in the town of Evreux. "It is absolutely necessary for me to see him," I say to the painter; I ask his

address of the café-keeper; he does not know it; I go out and visit all the bakers and the druggists that I meet with. Every one eats bread and takes medicine; it is impossible that one of those manufacturers should not know the address of Monsieur de Fréchédé. I did find it there, in fact; I dust off my blouse, I buy a black cravat, gloves, and I go and ring gently, in the Rue Chatrain, at the iron grating of a private residence which rears its brick facade and slate roofs in the clearing of a sunny park. A servant lets me in. Monsieur de Fréchédé is absent, but Madame is at home. I wait for a few seconds in a salon; the portière is raised and an old lady appears. She has an air so affable that I am reassured. I explain to her in a few words who I am.

"Sir," she says with a kind smile, "I have often heard speak of your family. I think, even, that I have met at Madame Lezant's, madame, your mother, during my last journey to Paris; you are welcome here."

We talked a long time; I, somewhat embarrassed, covering with my képi the spot on my neck; she trying to persuade me to accept some money, which I refuse.

She says to me at last: "I desire with all my heart to be useful to you. What can I do?" I reply: "Heavens, Madame, if you could get them to send me back to Paris, you would render me a great service; communications will be interrupted very soon, if the newspapers are to be believed; they talk of another *coup d'état*, or the overthrow of the Empire; I have great need of seeing my mother again; and especially of not letting myself be taken prisoner here if the Prussians come."

In the meanwhile Monsieur de Fréchédé enters. In two words he is made acquainted with the situation.

"If you wish to come with me to the doctor of the hospital," he says, "you have no time to lose."

To the doctor! Good heavens! and how account to him for my absence from the hospital? I dare not breathe a word; I follow my protector, asking myself how it will all end. We arrive; the doctor looks at me with a stupefied air. I do not give him time to open his mouth, and I

deliver with prodigious volubility a string of jeremiads over my sad position.

Monsieur de Fréchédé in his turn takes up the argument, and asks him, in my favour, to give me a convalescent's leave of absence for two months.

"Monsieur is, in fact, sick enough," says the doctor, "to be entitled to two months' rest; if my colleagues and if the General look at it as I do your protégé will be able in a few days to return to Paris."

"That's good," replies Monsieur de Fréchédé. "I thank you, doctor; I will speak to the General myself to-night."

We are in the street; I heave a great sigh of relief; I press the hand of that excellent man who shows so kindly an interest in me. I run to find Francis again. We have but just time to get back; we arrive at the gate of the hospital; Francis rings; I salute the sister. She stops me: "Did you not tell me this morning that you were going to the commissariat?"

"Quite right, sister."

"Very well; the General has just left here. Go and see the director and Sister Angèle; they are waiting for you; you will explain to them, no doubt, the object of your visits to the commissariat."

We remount, all crestfallen, the dormitory stairs. Sister Angèle is there, who waits for us, and who says:

"Never could I have believed such a thing! You have been all over the city, yesterday and to-day, and Heaven knows what kind of life you have been leading!"

"Oh, really!" I exclaim.

She looked at me so fixedly that I breathed not another word.

"All the same," she continued, "the General himself met you on the Grand Square to-day. I denied that you had gone out, and I searched for you all over the hospital. The General was right, you were not here. He asked me for your names; I gave him the name of one of you, I refused to reveal the other, and I did wrong, that is certain, for you do not deserve it!"

"Oh, how much I thank you, my sister!" But Sister

Angèle did not listen to me. She was indignant over my conduct! There was but one thing to do; keep quiet and accept the downpour without trying to shelter myself.

In the meantime Francis was summoned before the director, and since, I do not know why, they suspected him of corrupting me; and since he was, moreover, by reason of his foolery, in bad odour with the doctor and the sisters, he was informed that he must leave the hospital the following day and join his corps at once.

"Those huzzies with whom we dined yesterday are licensed women, who have sold us; it was the director himself who told me," he declared furiously.

All the time we are cursing the jades and lamenting over our uniforms which made us so recognizable, the rumour runs that the Emperor is taken prisoner and that the Republic has been proclaimed at Paris; I give a franc to an old man who was allowed to go out and who brings me a copy of the "*Gaulois*." The news is true. The hospital exults. Badinguet fallen! it is not too soon; good-by to the war that is ended at last.

The following morning Francis and I, we embrace and he departs. "Till we meet again," he shouts to me as he shuts the gate; "and in Paris!"

Oh, the days that followed that day! What suffering; what desolation! Impossible to leave the hospital; a sentinel paced up and down, in my honour, before the door. I had, however, spirit enough not to try to sleep. I paced like a caged beast in the yard. I prowled thus for the space of twelve hours. I knew my prison to its smallest cranny. I knew the spots where the lichens and the mosses pushed up through the sections of the wall which had given way in cracking. Disgust for my corridor, for my truckle-bed flattened out like a pancake, for my linen rotten with dirt, took hold of me. I lived isolated, speaking to no one, beating the flint stones of the courtyard with my feet, straying, like a troubled soul, under the arcades whitewashed with yellow ochre the same as the wards, coming back to the grated entrance gate surmounted by a flag, mounting to the first floor where my bed was, descend-

ing to where the kitchen shone, flashing the sparkle of its red copper through the bare nakedness of the scene. I gnawed my fists with impatience, watching at certain hours the mingled coming and going of civilians and soldiers, passing and repassing on every floor, filling the galleries with their interminable march.

I had no longer any strength left to resist the persecution of the sisters, who drove us on Sunday into the chapel. I became a monomaniac; one fixed idea haunted me; to flee as quickly as possible that lamentable jail. With that, money worry oppressed me. My mother had forwarded a hundred francs to me at Dunkirk, where it seems I ought to be. The money never appeared. I saw the time when I should not have a sou to buy either paper or tobacco.

Meanwhile the days passed. The De Fréchêdés seemed to have forgotten me, and I attributed their silence to my escapades, of which they had no doubt been informed. Soon to all these anxieties were added horrible pains: ill-cared for and aggravated by my chase after petticoats, my bowels became inflamed. I suffered so that I came to fear I should no longer be able to bear the journey. I concealed my sufferings, fearing the doctor would force me to stay longer at the hospital. I keep my bed for a few days; then, as I felt my strength diminishing, I wished to get up, in spite of all, and I went downstairs into the yard. Sister Angèle no longer spoke to me, and in the evening, while she made her rounds in the corridor and in the mess, turning so as not to notice the sparks of the forbidden pipes that glowed in the shadows, she passed before me, indifferent, cold, turning away her eyes. One morning, however, when I had dragged myself into the courtyard and sunk down on every bench to rest, she saw me so changed, so pale, that she could not keep from a movement of compassion. In the evening, after she had finished her visit to the dormitories, I was leaning with one elbow on my bolster, and, with eyes wide open, I was looking at the bluish beams which the moon cast through the windows of the corridor, when the door at the farther end opened

again, and I saw, now bathed in silver vapour, now in shadow, and as if clothed in black crepe, according as to whether she passed before the casements or along the walls, Sister Angèle, who was coming toward me. She was smiling gently. "To-morrow morning," she said to me, "you are to be examined by the doctors. I saw Madame de Fréché to-day; it is probable that you will start for Paris in two or three days." I spring up in my bed, my face brightens, I wanted to jump and sing; never was I happier. Morning rises. I dress, and uneasy, nevertheless, I direct my way to the room where sits a board of officers and doctors.

One by one the soldiers exhibit their bodies gouged with wounds or bunched with hair. The General scraped one of his finger nails, the Colonel of the Gendarmerie* fans himself with a newspaper; the practitioners talk among themselves as they feel the men. My turn comes at last. They examine me from head to foot, they press down on my stomach, swollen and tense like a balloon, and with a unanimity of opinion the council grants me a convalescent's leave of sixty days.

I am going at last to see my mother, to recover my curios, my books! I feel no more the red-hot iron that burns my entrails; I leap like a kid!

I announce to my family the good news. My mother writes me letter after letter, wondering why I do not come. Alas! my order of absence must be countersigned at the division headquarters at Rouen. It comes back after five days; I am "in order"; I go to find Sister Angèle; I beg her to obtain for me before the time fixed for my departure permission to go into the city to thank De Fréchédé, who have been so good to me. She goes to look for the director and brings me back permission. I run to the house of those kind people, who force me to accept a silk handkerchief and fifty francs for the journey. I go in search of my papers at the commissariat. I return to the hospital, I have but a few minutes to spare. I go in quest of Sister

* Armed police

Angèle, whom I find in the garden, and I say to her with great emotion:

"Oh, dear Sister, I am leaving; how can I ever repay you for all that you have done for me?"

I take her hand which she tries to withdraw, and I carry it to my lips. She grows red. "Adieu!" she murmurs, and menacing me with her finger, she adds playfully, "Be good! and above all do not make any wicked acquaintances on the journey."

"Oh, do not fear, my Sister. I promise you!"

The hour strikes; the door opens; I hurry off to the station; I jump into a car; the train moves; I have left Evreux. The coach is half full, but I occupy, fortunately, one of the corners. I put my nose out of the window; I see some pollarded trees, the tops of a few hills that undulate away into the distance, a bridge astride of a great pond that sparkles in the sun like burnished glass. All this is not very pleasing. I sink back in my corner, looking now and then at the telegraph wires that stripe the ultramarine sky with their black lines, when the train stops, the travellers who are about me descend, the door shuts, then opens again and makes way for a young woman. While she seats herself and arranges her dress, I catch a glimpse of her face under the displacing of her veil. She is charming; with her eyes full of the blue of heaven, her lips stained with purple, her white teeth, her hair the colour of ripe corn. I engage her in conversation. She is called Reine; embroiders flowers; we chat like old friends. Suddenly she turns pale, and is about to faint. I open the windows, I offer her a bottle of salts which I have carried with me ever since my departure from Paris; she thanks me, it is nothing, she says, and she leans on my knapsack and tries to sleep. Fortunately we are alone in the compartment, but the wooden partition that divides into equal parts the body of the carriage comes up only as far as the waist, and one can see and above all hear the clamor and the coarse laughter of the country men and women. I could have thrashed them with hearty good will, these imbeciles who were troubling her sleep! I contented myself

with listening to the commonplace opinions which they exchanged on politics. I soon have enough of it; I stop my ears. I too, try to sleep; but that phrase which was spoken by the station-master of the last station, "You will not get to Paris, the rails are torn up at Mantes," returned in my dreams like an obstinate refrain. I open my eyes. My neighbour wakes up, too; I do not wish to share my fears with her; we talk in a low voice. She tells me that she is going to join her mother at Sèvres. "But," I say to her, "the train will scarcely enter Paris before eleven o'clock to-night. You will never have time to reach the landing on the left bank."

"What shall I do?" she says, "if my brother is not down at my arrival?"

Oh, misery, I am as dirty as a comb and my stomach burns! I can not dream of taking her to my bachelor lodgings, and then I wish before all to see my mother. What to do? I look at Reine with distress. I take her hand; at that moment the train takes a curve, the jerk throws her forward; our lips approach, they touch, I press mine; she turns red. Good heavens, her mouth moves imperceptibly; she returns my kiss; a long thrill runs up my spine; at contact of those ardent embers my senses fail. Oh! Sister Angèle, Sister Angèle! a man can not make himself over! And the train roars and rolls onward, without slackening speed; we are flying under full steam toward Mantes; my fears are vain; the track is clear. Reine half shuts her eyes; her head falls on my shoulder; her little waves of hair tangle with my beard and tickle my lips. I put my arm about her waist, which yields, and I rock her. Paris is not far; we pass the freight-depots, by the roundhouses where the engines roar in red vapour, getting up steam; the train stops; they take up the tickets. After reflection, I will take Reine to my bachelor rooms, provided her brother is not waiting her arrival. We descend from the carriage; her brother is there. "In five days," she says, with a kiss, and the pretty bird has flown. Five days after I was in my bed, atrociously sick, and the Prussians occupy Sèvres. Never since then have I seen her

My heart is heavy. I heave a deep sigh; this is not, however, the time to be sad! I am jolting on in a fiacre. I recognise the neighbourhood; I arrive before my mother's house; I dash up the steps, four at a time. I pull the bell violently; the maid opens the door. "It's Monsieur!" and she runs to tell my mother, who darts out to meet me, turns pale, embraces me, looks me over from head to foot, steps back a little, looks at me once more, and hugs me again. Meanwhile the servant has stripped the buffet. "You must be hungry, M. Eugène?" I should think I was hungry! I devour everything they give me. I toss off great glasses of wine; to tell the truth, I do not know what I am eating and what I am drinking!

At length I go to my rooms to rest. I find my lodging just as I left it. I run through it, radiant, then I sit down on the divan and I rest there, ecstatic, beatific, feasting my eyes with the view of my knickknacks and my books. I undress, however; I splash about in a great tub, rejoicing that for the first time in many months I am going to get into a clean bed with white feet and toenails trimmed. I spring onto the mattress, which rebounds. I dive my head into the feather pillow, my eyes close; I soar on full wings into the land of dreams.

I seem to see Francis, who is lighting his enormous wooden pipe, and Sister Angèle, who is contemplating me with her little moue; then Reine advances toward me, I awake with a start, I behave like an idiot, I sink back again up to my ears, but the pains in my bowels, calmed for a moment, awake, now that the nerves become less tense, and I rub my stomach gently, thinking that the horrors of dysentery are at last over! I am at home. I have my rooms to myself, and I say to myself that one must have lived in the promiscuity of hospitals and camps to appreciate the value of a basin of water, to appreciate the solitude where modesty may rest at ease.

THE SUBSTITUTE

(Le Remplaçant)

By FRANÇOIS COPPÉE

HE was scarcely ten years old when he was first arrested as a vagabond.

He spoke thus to the judge:

"I am called Jean François Leturc, and for six months I was with the man who sings and plays upon a cord of catgut between the lanterns at the Place de la Bastille. I sang the refrain with him, and after that I called, 'Here's all the new songs, ten centimes, two sous!' He was always drunk, and used to beat me. That is why the police picked me up the other night. Before that I was with the man who sells brushes. My mother was a laundress; her name was Adèle. At one time she lived with a man on the ground-floor at Montmartre. She was a good work-woman and liked me. She made money because she had for customers waiters in the cafés, and they use a good deal of linen. On Sundays she used to put me to bed early so that she could go to the ball. On week-days she sent me to Les Frères, where I learned to read. Well, the sergeant-de-ville whose beat was in our street used always to stop before our windows to talk with her—a good-looking chap, with a medal from the Crimea. They were married, and after that everything went wrong. He didn't take to me, and turned mother against me. Every one had a blow for me, and so, to get out of the house, I spent whole days in the Place Clichy, where I knew the mountebanks. My father-in-law

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lost his place, and my mother her work. She used to go out washing to take care of him; this gave her a cough—the steam. . . . She is dead at Lamboisière. She was a good woman. Since that I have lived with the seller of brushes and the catgut scraper. Are you going to send me to prison?”

He said this openly, cynically, like a man. He was a little ragged street-arab, as tall as a boot, his forehead hidden under a queer mop of yellow hair.

Nobody claimed him, and they sent him to the Reform School.

Not very intelligent, idle, clumsy with his hands, the only trade he could learn there was not a good one—that of reseating straw chairs. However, he was obedient, naturally quiet and silent, and he did not seem to be profoundly corrupted by that school of vice. But when, in his seventeenth year, he was thrown out again on the streets of Paris, he unhappily found there his prison comrades, all great scamps, exercising their dirty professions: teaching dogs to catch rats in the sewers, and blacking shoes on ball nights in the passage of the Opera—amateur wrestlers, who permitted themselves to be thrown by the Hercules of the booths—or fishing at noontime from rafts; all of these occupations he followed to some extent, and, some months after he came out of the house of correction, he was arrested again for a petty theft—a pair of old shoes priggled from a shop-window. Result: a year in the prison of Sainte Pélagie, where he served as valet to the political prisoners.

He lived in much surprise among this group of prisoners, all very young, negligent in dress, who talked in loud voices, and carried their heads in a very solemn fashion. They used to meet in the cell of one of the oldest of them, a fellow of some thirty years, already a long time in prison and quite a fixture at Sainte Pélagie—a large cell, the walls covered with coloured caricatures, and from the window of which one could see all Paris—its roofs, its spires, and its domes—and far away the distant line of hills, blue and indistinct upon the sky. There were upon the walls some shelves filled with volumes and all the old paraphernalia of a fencing-

room: broken masks, rusty foils, breast-plates, and gloves that were losing their tow. It was there that the "politicians" used to dine together, adding to the everlasting "soup and beef," fruit, cheese, and pints of wine which Jean François went out and got by the can—a tumultuous repast interrupted by violent disputes, and where, during the dessert, the "Carmagnole" and "Ca Ira" were sung in full chorus. They assumed, however, an air of great dignity on those days when a newcomer was brought in among them, at first entertaining him gravely as a citizen, but on the morrow using him with affectionate familiarity, and calling him by his nickname. Great words were used there: Corporation, Responsibility, and phrases quite unintelligible to Jean François—such as this, for example, which he once heard imperiously put forth by a frightful little hunchback who blotted some writing-paper every night:

"It is done. This is the composition of the Cabinet: Raymond, the Bureau of Public Instruction; Martial, the Interior; and for Foreign Affairs, myself."

His time done, he wandered again around Paris, watched afar by the police, after the fashion of cockchafers, made by cruel children to fly at the end of a string. He became one of those fugitive and timid beings whom the law, with a sort of coquetry, arrests and releases by turn—something like those platonic fishers who, in order that they may not exhaust their fish-pond, throw immediately back in the water the fish which has just come out of the net. Without a suspicion on his part that so much honour had been done to so sorry a subject, he had a special bundle of memoranda in the mysterious portfolios of the Rue de Jérusalem. His name was written in round hand on the gray paper of the cover, and the notes and reports, carefully classified, gave him his successive appellations: "Name, Leturc;" "the prisoner Leturc," and, at last, "the criminal Leturc."

He was two years out of prison, dining where he could, sleeping in night lodging-houses and sometimes in lime-kilns, and taking part with his fellows in interminable games of pitch-penny on the boulevards near the barriers. He wore a greasy cap on the back of his head, carpet slippers, and

a short white blouse. When he had five sous he had his hair curled. He danced at Constant's at Montparnasse; bought for two sous to sell for four at the door of Bobino, the jack of hearts or the ace of clubs serving as a counter-mark; sometimes opened the door of a carriage; led horses to the horse-market. From the lottery of all sorts of miserable employments he drew a goodly number. Who can say if the atmosphere of honour which one breathes as a soldier, if military discipline might not have saved him. Taken, in a cast of the net, with some young loafers who robbed drunkards sleeping on the streets, he denied very earnestly having taken part in their expeditions. Perhaps he told the truth, but his antecedents were accepted in lieu of proof, and he was sent for three years to Poissy. There he made coarse playthings for children, was tattooed on the chest, learned thieves' slang and the penal-code. A new liberation, and a new plunge into the sink of Paris; but very short this time, for at the end of six months at the most he was again compromised in a night robbery, aggravated by climbing and breaking—a serious affair, in which he played an obscure role, half dupe and half fence. On the whole his complicity was evident, and he was sent for five years at hard labour. His grief in this adventure was above all in being separated from an old dog which he found on a dung-heap, and cured of the mange. The beast loved him.

Toulon, the ball and chain, the work in the harbour, the blows from a stick, wooden shoes on bare feet, soup of black beans dating from Trafalgar, no tobacco money, and the terrible sleep in a camp swarming with convicts; that was what he experienced for five broiling summers and five winters raw with the Mediterranean wind. He came out from there stunned, was sent under surveillance to Vernon, where he worked some time on the river. Then, an incorrigible vagabond, he broke his exile and came again to Paris. He had his savings, fifty-six francs, that is to say, time enough for reflection. During his absence his former wretched companions had dispersed. He was well hidden, and slept in a loft at an old woman's, to whom he represented himself as a sailor, tired of the sea, who had lost

his papers in a recent shipwreck, and who wanted to try his hand at something else. His tanned face and his calloused hands, together with some sea phrases which he dropped from time to time made his tale seem probable enough.

One day when he risked a saunter in the streets, and when chance had led him as far as Montmartre, where he was born, an unexpected memory stopped him before the door of Les Frères, where he had learned to read. As it was very warm the door was open, and by a single glance the passing outcast was able to recognise the peacable school-room. Nothing was changed: neither the bright light shining in at the great windows, nor the crucifix over the desk, nor the rows of benches with the tables furnished with ink-stands and pencils, nor the table of weights and measures, nor the map where pins stuck in still indicated the operations of some ancient war. Heedlessly and without thinking, Jean François read on the blackboard the words of the Evangelist which had been set there as a copy:

"Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

It was undoubtedly the hour for recreation, for the Brother Professor had left his chair, and, sitting on the edge of a table, he was telling a story to the boys who surrounded him with eager and attentive eyes. What a bright and innocent face he had, that beardless young man, in his long black gown, and white necktie, and great ugly shoes, and his badly cut brown hair streaming out behind! All the simple figures of the children of the people who were watching him seemed scarcely less childlike than his; above all when, delighted with some of his own simple and priestly pleasantries, he broke out in an open and frank peal of laughter which showed his white and regular teeth, a peal so contagious that all the scholars laughed loudly in their turn. It was such a sweet, simple group in the bright sunlight, which lighted their dear eyes and their blond curls.

Jean François looked at them for some time in silence, and for the first time in that savage nature, all instinct and appe-

tite, there awoke a mysterious, a tender emotion. His heart, that seared and hardened heart, unmoved when the convict's cudgel or the heavy whip of the watchman fell on his shoulders, beat oppressively. In that sight he saw again his infancy; and closing his eyes sadly, the prey to torturing regret, he walked quickly away.

Then the words written on the blackboard came back to his mind.

"If it wasn't too late, after all!" he murmured; "if I could again, like others, eat honestly my brown bread, and sleep my fill without nightmare! The spy must be sharp who recognises me. My beard, which I shaved off down there, has grown out thick and strong. One can burrow somewhere in the great ant-hill, and work can be found. Whoever is not worked to death in the hell of the galleys comes out agile and robust, and I learned there to climb ropes with loads upon my back. Building is going on everywhere here, and the masons need helpers. Three francs a day! I never earned so much. Let me be forgotten, and that is all I ask."

He followed his courageous resolution; he was faithful to it, and after three months he was another man. The master for whom he worked called him his best workman. After a long day upon the scaffolding, in the hot sun and the dust, constantly bending and raising his back to take the hod from the man at his feet and pass it to the man over his head, he went for his soup to the cook-shop, tired out, his legs aching, his hands burning, his eyelids stuck with plaster, but content with himself, and carrying his well-earned money in a knot in his handkerchief. He went out now without fear, since he could not be recognised in his white mask, and since he had noticed that the suspicious glances of the policeman were seldom turned on the tired workman. He was quiet and sober. He slept the sound sleep of fatigue. He was free!

At last—oh, supreme recompense!—he had a friend!

He was a fellow-workman like himself, named Savinien, a little peasant with red lips who had come to Paris with his stick over his shoulder and a bundle on the end of it,

fleeing from the wine-shops and going to mass every Sunday. Jean François loved him for his piety, for his candour, for his honesty, for all that he himself had lost, and so long ago. It was a passion, profound and unrestrained, which transformed him by fatherly cares and attentions. Savinien, himself of a weak and egotistical nature, let things take their course, satisfied only in finding a companion who shared his horror of the wine-shop. The two friends lived together in a fairly comfortable lodging, but their resources were very limited. They were obliged to take into their room a third companion, an old Auvergnat, gloomy and rapacious, who found it possible out of his meagre salary to save something with which to buy a place in his own country. Jean François and Savinien were always together. On holidays they together took long walks in the environs of Paris, and dined under an arbour in one of those small country inns where there are a great many mushrooms in the sauces and innocent rebusses on the napkins. There Jean François learned from his friend all that lore of which they who are born in the city are ignorant: learned the names of the trees, the flowers, and the plants; the various seasons for harvesting; he heard eagerly the thousand details of a labourious country life—the autumn sowing, the winter chores, the splendid celebrations of harvest and vintage days, the sound of the mills at the water-side, and the flails striking the ground, the tired horses led to water, and the hunting in the morning mist; and, above all, the long evenings around the fire of vine-shoots, that were shortened by some marvellous stories. He discovered in himself a source of imagination before unknown, and found a singular delight in the recital of events so placid, so calm, so monotonous.

One thing troubled him, however: it was the fear lest Savinien might learn something of his past. Sometimes there escaped him some low word of thieves' slang, a vulgar gesture—vestiges of his former horrible existence—and he felt the pain one feels when old wounds re-open; the more because he fancied that he sometimes saw in Savinien the awakening of an unhealthy curiosity. When the young man, already tempted by the pleasures which Paris offers

to the poorest, asked him about the mysteries of the great city, Jean François feigned ignorance and turned the subject; but he felt a vague inquietude for the future of his friend.

His uneasiness was not without foundation. Savinien could not long remain the simple rustic that he was on his arrival in Paris. If the gross and noisy pleasures of the wine-shop always repelled him, he was profoundly troubled by other temptations, full of danger for the inexperience of his twenty years. When spring came he began to go off alone, and at first he wandered about the brilliant entrance of some dancing-hall, watching the young girls who went in with their arms around each others' waists, talking in low tones. Then, one evening, when lilacs perfumed the air and the call to quadrilles was most captivating, he crossed the threshold, and from that time Jean François observed a change, little by little, in his manners and his visage. He often borrowed from his friend his scanty savings, and he forgot to repay. Jean François, feeling that he was abandoned, jealous and forgiving at the same time, suffered and was silent. He felt that he had no right to reproach him, but with the foresight of affection he indulged in cruel and inevitable presentiments.

One evening, as he was mounting the stairs to his room, absorbed in his thoughts, he heard, as he was about to enter, the sound of angry voices, and he recognised that of the old Auvergnat who lodged with Savinien and himself. An old habit of suspicion made him stop at the landing-place and listen to learn the cause of the trouble.

"Yes," said the Auvergnat, angrily, "I am sure that some one has opened my trunk and stolen from it the three louis that I had hidden in a little box; and he who has done this thing must be one of the two companions who sleep here, if it were not the servant Maria. It concerns you as much as it does me, since you are the master of the house, and I will drag you to the courts if you do not let me at once break open the valises of the two masons. My poor gold! It was here yesterday in its place, and I will tell you just what it was, so that if we find it again nobody

can accuse me of having lied. Ah, I know them, my three beautiful gold pieces, and I can see them as plainly as I see you! One piece was more worn than the others; it was of greenish gold, with a portrait of the great emperor. The other was a great old fellow with a queue and epaulettes; and the third, which had on it a Philippe with whiskers, I had marked with my teeth. They don't trick me. Do you know that I only wanted two more like that to pay for my vineyard? Come, search these fellows' things with me, or I will call the police! Hurry up!"

"All right," said the voice of the landlord; "we will go and search with Maria. So much the worse for you if we find nothing, and the masons get angry. You have forced me to it."

Jean François's soul was full of fright. He remembered the embarrassed circumstances and the small loans of Savinien, and how sober he had seemed for some days. And yet he could not believe that he was a thief. He heard the Auvergnat panting in his eager search, and he pressed his closed fists against his breast as if to still the furious beating of his heart.

"Here they are!" suddenly shouted the victorious miser. "Here they are, my louis, my dear treasure; and in the Sunday vest of that little hypocrite of Limousin! Look, landlord, they are just as I told you. Here is the Napoleon, the man with a queue, and the Philippe that I have bitten. See the dents? Ah, the little beggar with the sanctified air. I should have much sooner suspected the other. Ah, the wretch! Well, he must go to the convict prison."

At this moment Jean François heard the well-known step of Savinien coming slowly up the stairs.

He is going to his destruction, thought he. Three stories I have time!

And, pushing open the door, he entered the room, pale as death, where he saw the landlord and the servant stupefied in a corner, while the Auvergnat, on his knees, in the disordered heap of clothes, was kissing the pieces of gold.

"Enough of this," he said, in a thick voice; "I took the money, and put it in my comrade's trunk. But that is too

bad. I am a thief, but not a Judas. Call the police; I will not try to escape, only I must say a word to Savinien in private. Here he is."

In fact, the little Limousin had just arrived, and seeing his crime discovered, believing himself lost, he stood there, his eyes fixed, his arms hanging.

Jean François seized him forcibly by the neck, as if to embrace him; he put his mouth close to Savinien's ear, and said to him in a low, supplicating voice,

"Keep quiet."

"Leave me alone with him. I tell you I won't go away. Lock us in if you wish, but leave us alone."

With a commanding gesture he showed them the door. They went out.

Savinien, broken by grief, was sitting on the bed, and lowered his eyes without understanding anything.

"Listen," said Jean François, who came and took him by the hands. "I understand! You have stolen three gold pieces to buy some trifle for a girl. That costs six months in prison. But one only comes out from there to go back again, and you will become a pillar of police courts and tribunals. I understand it. I have been seven years at the Reform School, a year at Saint Pélagie, three years at Poissy, five years at Toulon. Now, don't be afraid. Everything is arranged. I have taken it on my shoulders."

"It is dreadful," said Savinien; but hope was springing up again in his cowardly heart.

"When the elder brother is under the flag, the younger one does not go," replied Jean François. "I am your substitute, that's all. You care for me a little, do you not? I am paid. Don't be childish—don't refuse. They would have taken me again one of these days, for I am a runaway from exile. And then, do you see, that life will be less hard for me than for you. I know it all, and I shall not complain if I have not done you this service for nothing, and if you swear to me that you will never do it again. Savinien, I have loved you well, and your friendship has made me happy. It is through it that, since I have known you, I have been honest and pure, as I might always have been,

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perhaps, if I had had, like you, a father to put a tool in my hands, a mother to teach me my prayers. It was my sole regret that I was useless to you, and that I deceived you concerning myself. To-day I have unmasked in saving you. It is all right. Do not cry, and embrace me, for already I hear heavy boots on the stairs. They are coming with the *posse*, and we must not seem to know each other so well before those chaps."

He pressed Savinien quickly to his breast, then pushed him from him, when the door was thrown wide open.

It was the landlord and the Auvergnat, who brought the police. Jean François sprang forward to the landing-place, held out his hands for the handcuffs, and said, laughing, "Forward, bad lot!"

To-day he is at Cayenne, condemned for life as an incorrigible.

THE LOST WORDS OF LOVE

(*Les Mots Perdus*)

By CATULLE MENDES

I

ONCE upon a time a very cruel fairy, pretty as the flowers, but wicked as the serpents who hide in the grass ready to spring upon you, resolved to avenge herself upon all the people of a great country. Where was this country? On the mountain or in the plain, at the shore of the river or by the sea? This the story does not tell. Perhaps it was near the kingdom where the dress-makers were very skilful in adorning princesses' robes with moons and with stars. And what the offence under which the fairy smarted? On this point also the story is silent. Perhaps they had omitted to offer up prayers to her at the baptism of the king's daughter. Be this as it may, it is certain that the fairy was in a great rage.

At first she asked herself whether she should devastate the country by sending out the thousands of spirits that served her to set fire to all the palaces and all the cottages; or whether she should cause all the lilacs and all the roses to fade; or whether she should turn all the young girls into ugly old women. She could have let loose all the four winds in the streets and laid low all the houses and trees. At her command fire-spitting mountains would have buried the entire land under a mass of burning lava, and the sun would have turned from his path so as not to shine upon the accursed city. But she did still worse. Like a thief leisurely

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choosing the most precious jewels in a case, she removed from the memory of men and woman the three divine words:

"I love you."

And having wrought this affliction, she removed herself with a smile that would have been more hideous than the church of the devil had she not had the most beautiful rosy lips in all creation.

II

At first the men and women only half perceived the wrong that had been done them. They felt they lacked something, but did not know what. The sweethearts who met in the eglantine lanes, the married couples who talked confidently to each other behind closed windows and drawn curtains, suddenly interrupted themselves and looked at each other or embraced. They felt, indeed, the desire to utter a certain customary phrase, but they had no idea even of what that phrase was. They were astonished, uneasy, but they asked no question, for they knew not what question to ask, so complete was their forgetfulness of the precious word. As yet, however, their suffering was not very great. They had so many other words they could whisper to each other, so many forms of endearment.

Alas! It was not long before they were seized with a profound melancholy. In vain did they adore each other, in vain did they call each other by the tenderest names and speak the sweetest language. It was not enough to declare that all the bliss lay in their kisses; to swear that they were ready to die, he for her and she for him; to call each other: "My soul; My flame! My dream!" They instinctively felt the need of saying and hearing another word, more exquisite than all other words; and with the bitter memory of the ecstasy contained in this word came the anguish of never again being able to utter or to hear it.

Quarrels followed in the wake of this distress. Judging his happiness incomplete on account of the avowal that was henceforth denied to the most ardent lips, the lover demanded from her and she from him the very thing that neither the one nor the other could give, without either knowing what

that thing was, nor being able to name it. They accused each other of coldness, of perfidy, not believing in the tenderness which was not expressed as they desired it should be.

Thus the sweethearts soon ceased to have their rendezvous in the lanes where the eglantines grew, and even after the windows were closed the conjugal chambers echoed only with dry conversations from easy-chairs that were never drawn close to each other. Can there be joy without love? If the country which had incurred the hatred of the fairy had been ruined by war, or devastated by pestilence, it could not have been as desolate, as mournful, as forlorn as it had become on account of the three forgotten words.

III

There lived in this country a poet whose plight was even more pitiful than the plight of all the rest. It was not that having a beautiful sweetheart he was in despair at not being able to say and to hear the stolen word. He had no sweetheart. He was too much in love with the muse. It was because he was unable to finish a poem he had begun the day before the wicked fairy had accomplished her vengeance. And why? Because it just happened that the poem was to wind up with "I love you!" and it was impossible to end it in any other way.

The poet struck his brow, took his head between his hands, and asked himself: "Have I gone mad?" He was certain he had found the words that were to precede the last point of exclamation before he had commenced to write the stanza. The proof that he had found them was that the rhyme with which it was to go was already written. There it was—it waited for them, nay, called aloud for them; it wanted no others, waiting for them like lips waiting for sister lips to kiss them. And this indispensable, fatal phrase he had forgotten; he could not even recall that he had ever known it. Surely there was some mystery in this, the poet mused unceasingly and with bitter melancholy—oh, the pang of interrupted poems!—as he sat at the edge of the forest near the limpid fountains where the fairies are wont to dance of an evening by starlight.

IV

Now as he sat one morning under the branches of a tree, the wicked, thieving fairy saw him and loved him. One is not a fairy for nothing; a fairy does not stand on ceremony. Swifter than a butterfly kisses a rose she put her lips on his lips, and the poet, greatly preoccupied though he was with his ode, could not help but feel the heavenliness of her caress. Blue and rose diamond grottos opened up in the depths of the earth, luminous as the stars. Thither the poet and the fairy were drawn in a chariot of gold by winged steeds who left the earth in their flight. And for a long, long time they loved each other, forgetful of all but their kisses and smiles. If they ceased for a moment to have their mouths united and to look into each other's eyes, it was but to take pleasure in more amiable diversions. Gnomes dressed in violet satin, elves attired in a misty haze, performed dances before them that fell in rhythm with the music of unseen orchestras, while flitting hands that had no arms brought them ruby baskets of snow-white fruit, perfumed like a white rose and like a virgin bosom. Or, to please the fairy more, the poet recited, while striking the chords of a theorbo, the most beautiful verses his fancy could conceive.

Fairy that she was, she had never known joy comparable to this of being sung by a beautiful young man who invented new songs every day. And when he grew silent, and she felt the breath of his mouth near her, felt it passing through her hair, she melted away in tenderness.

Their happiness seemed without end. Days passed by, many, many days, but nothing occurred to disturb their joy. And yet she had moments of gloom, when she would sit musing, with her cheek on her hand and her hair falling in streams down to her hips.

"O queen!" he cried, "what is it that makes you sad; what more can you desire, seeing that we are so happy in the midst of all our pleasures, you who are all powerful, you who are so beautiful?"

At first she made no answer, but when he insisted, she sighed and said: "Alas! one always ends by suffering the

evil that one has inflicted on others. Alas! I am sad because you have never told me: 'I love you.' "

He did not pronounce the words, but uttered a cry of joy at having found again the end of his poem. In vain the fairy attempted to retain him in the blue and rose-diamond grottos, in the gardens of lilies that were as luminous as the stars. He returned to earth, completed, wrote and published his ode, in which the men and women of the afflicted country found again the divine words they had lost.

Now there were rendezvous again in the lanes, and warm, amorous conversations at the conjugal windows.

It is because of poetry that kisses are sweet, and lovers say nothing that the poets have not sung.

THE PROCURATOR OF JUDEA

(*Le Procureur de Judée*)

By ANATOLE FRANCE

LÆLIUS LAMIA, born in Italy of illustrious parents, had not yet discarded the *toga prætexta* when he set out for the schools of Athens to study philosophy. Subsequently he took up his residence at Rome, and in his house on the Esquiline, amid a circle of youthful wastrels, abandoned himself to licentious courses. But being accused of engaging in criminal relations with Lepida, the wife of Sulpicius Quirinus, a man of consular rank, and being found guilty, he was exiled by Tiberius Cæsar. At that time he was just entering his twenty-fourth year. During the eighteen years that his exile lasted he traversed Syria, Palestine, Cappadocia, and Armenia, and made prolonged visits to Antioch, Cæsarea, and Jerusalem. When, after the death of Tiberius, Caius was raised to the purple, Lamia obtained permission to return to Rome. He even regained a portion of his possessions. Adversity had taught him wisdom.

He avoided all intercourse with the wives and daughters of Roman citizens, made no efforts toward obtaining office, he'd aloof from public honours, and lived a secluded life in his house on the Esquiline. Occupying himself with the task of recording all the remarkable things he had seen during his distant travels, he turned, as he said, the vicissitudes of his years of expiation into a diversion for his hours of rest. In the midst of these calm enjoyments, alternating with assiduous study of the works of Epicurus, he recognized with : mixture of surprise and vexation that age was stealing

Translated by Frederick Chapman.

upon him. In his sixty-second year, being afflicted with an illness which proved in no slight degree troublesome, he decided to have recourse to the waters at Baïæ. The coast at that point, once frequented by the halcyon, was at this date the resort of the wealthy Roman, greedy of pleasure. For a week Lamia lived alone, without a friend in the brilliant crowd. Then one day, after dinner, an inclination to which he yielded urged him to ascend the inclines, which, covered with vines that resembled bacchantes, looked out upon the waves.

Having reached the summit he seated himself by the side of a path beneath a terebinth, and let his glances wander over the lovely landscape. To his left, livid and bare, the Phlegræan plain stretched out towards the ruins of Cumæ. On his right, Cape Misenum plunged its abrupt spur beneath the Tyrrhenian sea. Beneath his feet luxurious Baïæ, following the graceful outline of the coast, displayed its gardens, its villas thronged with statues, its porticos, its marble terraces along the shores of the blue ocean where the dolphins sported. Before him, on the other side of the bay, on the Campanian coast, gilded by the already sinking sun, gleamed the temples which far away rose above the laurels of Posilippo, whilst on the extreme horizon Vesuvius looked forth smiling.

Lamia drew from a fold of his toga a scroll containing the *Treatise upon Nature*, extended himself upon the ground, and began to read. But the warning cries of a slave necessitated his rising to allow of the passage of a litter which was being carried along the narrow pathway through the vineyards. The litter being uncurtained, permitted Lamia to see stretched upon the cushions as it was borne nearer to him the figure of an elderly man of immense bulk, who, supporting his head on his hand, gazed out with a gloomy and disdainful expression. His nose, which was aquiline, and his chin, which was prominent, seemed desirous of meeting across his lips, and his jaws were powerful.

From the first moment Lamia was convinced that the face was familiar to him. He hesitated a moment before the

name came to him. Then suddenly hastening towards the litter with a display of surprise and delight—

"Pontius Pilate!" he cried. "The gods be praised who have permitted me to see you once again!"

The old man gave a signal to the slaves to stop, and cast a keen glance upon the stranger who had addressed him.

"Pontius, my dear host," resumed the latter, "have twenty years so far whitened my hair and hollowed my cheeks that you no longer recognise your friend Ælius Lamia?"

At this name Pontius Pilate dismounted from the litter as actively as the weight of his years and the heaviness of his gait permitted him, and embraced Ælius Lamia again and again.

"Gods! what a treat it is to me to see you once more! But, alas, you call up memories of those long-vanished days when I was Procurator of Judæa, in the province of Syria. Why, it must be thirty years ago that I first met you. It was at Cæsarea, whither you came to drag out your weary term of exile. I was fortunate enough to alleviate it a little, and out of friendship, Lamia, you followed me to that depressing place Jerusalem, where the Jews filled me with bitterness and disgust. You remained for more than ten years my guest and my companion, and in converse about Rome and things Roman we both of us managed to find consolation—you for your misfortunes, and I for my burdens of State."

Lamia embraced him afresh.

"You forget two things, Pontius; you are overlooking the facts that you used your influence on my behalf with Herod Antipas, and that your purse was freely open to me."

"Let us not talk of that," replied Pontius, "since after your return to Rome you sent me by one of your freedmen a sum of money which repaid me with usury."

"Pontius, I could never consider myself out of your debt by the mere payment of money. But tell me, have the gods fulfilled your desires? Are you in the enjoyment of all the happiness you deserve? Tell me about your family, your fortunes, your health."

"I have withdrawn to Sicily, where I possess estates, and

where I cultivate wheat for the market. My eldest daughter, my best-beloved Pontia, who has been left a widow, lives with me, and directs my household. The gods be praised, I have preserved my mental vigour; my memory is not in the least degree enfeebled. But old age always brings in its train a long procession of griefs and infirmities. I am cruelly tormented with gout. And at this very moment you find me on my way to the Phlegræan plain in search of a remedy for my sufferings. From that burning soil, whence at night flames burst forth, proceed acrid exhalations of sulphur, which, so they say, ease the pains and restore suppleness to the stiffened joints. At least, the physicians assure me that it is so."

"May you find it so in your case, Pontius! But, despite the gout and its burning torments, you scarcely look as old as myself, although in reality you must be my senior by ten years. Unmistakably you have retained a greater degree of vigour than I ever possessed, and I am overjoyed to find you looking so hale. Why, dear friend, did you retire from the public service before the customary age? Why, on resigning your governorship in Judæa, did you withdraw to a voluntary exile on your Sicilian estates? Give me an account of your doings from the moment that I ceased to be a witness of them. You were preparing to suppress a Samaritan rising when I set out for Cappadocia, where I hoped to draw some profit from the breeding of horses and mules. I have not seen you since then. How did that expedition succeed? Pray tell me. Everything interests me that concerns you in any way."

Pontius Pilate sadly shook his head.

"My natural disposition," he said, "as well as a sense of duty, impelled me to fulfil my public responsibilities, not merely with diligence, but even with ardour. But I was pursued by unrelenting hatred. Intrigues and calumnies cut short my career in its prime, and the fruit it should have look to bear has withered away. You ask me about the Samaritan insurrection. Let us sit down on this hillock. I shall be able to give you an answer in few words. These

occurrences are as vividly present to me as if they had happened yesterday.

"A man of the people, of persuasive speech—there are many such to be met with in Syria—induced the Samaritans to gather together in arms on Mount Gerizim (which in that country is looked upon as a holy place) under the promise that he would disclose to their sight the sacred vessels which in the ancient days of Evander and our father, Æneas, had been hidden away by an eponymous hero, or rather a tribal deity, named Moses. Upon this assurance the Samaritans rose in rebellion; but having been warned in time to forestall them, I dispatched detachments of infantry to occupy the mountain, and stationed cavalry to keep the approaches to it under observation.

"These measures of prudence were urgent. The rebels were already laying siege to the town of Tyrathaba, situated at the foot of Mount Gerizim. I easily dispersed them, and stifled the as yet scarcely organized revolt. Then, in order to give a forcible example with as few victims as possible, I handed over to execution the leaders of the rebellion. But you are aware, Lamia, in what strait dependence I was kept by the proconsul Vitellius, who governed Syria not in, but against the interests of Rome, and looked upon the provinces of the empire as territories which could be farmed out to tetrarchs. The head men among the Samaritans, in their resentment against me, came and fell at his feet lamenting. To listen to them, nothing had been further from their thoughts than to disobey Cæsar. It was I who had provoked the rising, and it was purely in order to withstand my violence that they had gathered together around Tyrathaba. Vitellius listened to their complaints, and handing over the affairs of Judæa to his friend Marcellus, commanded me to go and justify my proceedings before the Emperor himself. With a heart overflowing with grief and resentment I took ship. Just as I approached the shores of Italy, Tiberius, worn out with age and the cares of empire, died suddenly on the self-same Cape Misenum, whose peak we see from this very spot magnified in the mists of evening. I demanded justice of Caius, his successor, whose

perception was naturally acute, and who was acquainted with Syrian affairs. But marvel with me, Lamia, at the maliciousness of fortune, resolved on my discomfiture. Caius then had in his suite at Rome the Jew Agrippa, his companion, the friend of his childhood, whom he cherished as his own eyes. Now Agrippa favoured Vitellius, inasmuch as Vitellius was the enemy of Antipas, whom Agrippa pursued with his hatred. The Emperor adopted the prejudices of his beloved Asiatic, and refused even to listen to me. There was nothing for me to do but bow beneath the stroke of unmerited misfortune. With tears for my meat and gall for my portion, I withdrew to my estates in Sicily, where I should have died of grief if my sweet Pontia had not come to console her father. I have cultivated wheat, and succeeded in producing the fullest ears in the whole province. But now my life is ended; the future will judge between Vitellius and me."

"Pontius," replied Lamia, "I am persuaded that you acted towards the Samaritans according to the rectitude of your character, and solely in the interests of Rome. But were you not perchance on that occasion a trifle too much influenced by that impetuous courage which has always swayed you? You will remember that in Judæa it often happened that I who, younger than you, should naturally have been more impetuous than you, was obliged to urge you to clemency and suavity."

"Suavity towards the Jews!" cried Pontius Pilate. "Although you have lived amongst them, it seems clear that you ill understand those enemies of the human race. Haughty and at the same time base, combining an invincible obstinacy with a despicably mean spirit, they weary alike your love and your hatred. My character, Lamia, was formed upon the maxims of the divine Augustus. When I was appointed Procurator of Judæa, the world was already penetrated with the majestic ideal of the *pax romana*. No longer, as in the days of our internecine strife, were we witnesses to the sack of a province for the aggrandisement of a proconsul. I knew where my duty lay. I was careful that my actions should be governed by prudence and mod-

eration. The gods are my witnesses that I was resolved upon mildness, and upon mildness only. Yet what did my benevolent intentions avail me? You were at my side, Lamia, when, at the outset of my career as ruler, the first rebellion came to a head. Is there any need for me to recall the details to you? The garrison had been transferred from Casarea to take up its winter quarters at Jerusalem. Upon the ensigns of the legionaries appeared the presentment of Cæsar. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, who did not recognize the indwelling divinity of the Emperor, were scandalized at this, as though, when obedience is compulsory, it were not less abject to obey a god than a man. The priests of their nation appeared before my tribunal imploring me with supercilious humility to have the ensigns removed from within the holy city. Out of reverence for the divine nature of Cæsar and the majesty of the empire, I refused to comply. Then the rabble made common cause with the priests, and all around the pretorium portentous cries of supplication arose. I ordered the soldiers to stack their spears in front of the tower of Antonia, and to proceed, armed only with sticks like lictors, to disperse the insolent crowd. But, heedless of blows, the Jews continued their entreaties, and the more obstinate amongst them threw themselves on the ground and, exposing their throats to the rods, deliberately courted death. You were a witness of my humiliation on that occasion, Lamia. By the order of Vitellius I was forced to send the insignia back to Casarea. That disgrace I had certainly not merited. Before the immortal gods I swear that never once during my term of office did I flout justice and the laws. But I am grown old. My enemies and detractors are dead. I shall die unavenged. Who will not retrieve my character?"

He moaned and lapsed into silence. Lamia replied:

"That man is prudent who neither hopes nor fears anything from the uncertain events of the future. Does it matter in the least what estimate men may form of us hereafter? We ourselves are after all our own witnesses, and our own judges. You must rely, Pontius Pilate, on the testimony you yourself bear to your own rectitude. Be con-

tent with your own personal respect and that of your friends. For the rest, we know that mildness by itself will not suffice for the work of government. There is but little room in the actions of public men for that indulgence of human frailty which the philosophers recommend."

"We'll say no more at present," said Pontius. "The sulphurous fumes which rise from the Phlegræan plain are more powerful when the ground which exhales them is still warm beneath the sun's rays. I must hasten on. Adieu! But now that I have rediscovered a friend, I should wish to take advantage of my good fortune. Do me the favour, Ælius Lamia, to give me your company at supper at my house to-morrow. My house stands on the seashore, at the extreme end of the town in the direction of Misenum. You will easily recognize it by the porch, which bears a painting representing Orpheus surrounded by tigers and lions, whom he is charming with the strains from his lyre.

"Till to-morrow, Lamia," he repeated, as he climbed once more into his litter. "To-morrow we will talk about Judæa."

The following day at the supper hour Lamia presented himself at the house of Pontius Pilate. Two couches only were in readiness for occupants. Creditably but simply equipped, the table held a silver service in which were set out beccaficos in honey, thrushes, oysters from the Lucrine lake, and lampreys from Sicily. As they proceeded with their repast, Pontius and Lamia interchanged inquiries with one another about their ailments, the symptoms of which they described at considerable length, mutually emulous of communicating the various remedies which had been recommended to them. Then, congratulating themselves on being thrown together once more at Baïæ, they vied with one another in praise of the beauty of that enchanting coast and the mildness of the climate they enjoyed. Lamia was enthusiastic about the charms of the courtesans who frequented the seashore laden with golden ornaments and trailing draperies of barbaric broidery. But the aged Procurator deplored the ostentation with which by means of trumpery jewels and filmy garments foreigners and even enemies of the empire beguiled the Romans of their gold. After a time they turned to the

subject of the great engineering feats that had been accomplished in the country; the prodigious bridge constructed by Caius between Puteoli and Baiæ, and the canals which Augustus excavated to convey the waters of the ocean to Lake Avernus and the Lucrine lake.

"I also," said Pontius, with a sigh, "I also wished to set afoot public works of great utility. When, for my sins, I was appointed Governor of Judæa, I conceived the idea of furnishing Jerusalem with an abundant supply of pure water by means of an aqueduct. The elevation of the levels, the proportionate capacity of the various parts, the gradient for the brazen reservoirs to which the distribution pipes were to be fixed—I had gone into every detail, and decided everything for myself with the assistance of mechanical experts. I had drawn up regulations for the superintendents so as to prevent individuals from making unauthorized depredations. The architects and the workmen had their instructions. I gave orders for the commencement of operations. But far from viewing with satisfaction the construction of that conduit, which was intended to carry to their town upon its massive arches not only water but health, the inhabitants of Jerusalem gave vent to lamentable outcries. They gathered tumultuously together, exclaiming against the sacrilege and impiety, and hurling themselves upon the workmen, scattered the very foundation stones. Can you picture to yourself, Lamia, a filthier set of barbarians? Nevertheless, Vitellius decided in their favour, and I received orders to put a stop to the work."

"It is a knotty point," said Lamia, "how far one is justified in devising things for the commonweal against the will of the populace."

Pontius Pilate continued as though he had not heard this interruption.

"Refuse an aqueduct! What madness! But whatever is of Roman origin is distasteful to the Jews. In their eyes we are an unclean race, and our very presence appears a profanation to them. You will remember that they would never venture to enter the pretorium for fear of defiling themselves, and that I was consequently obliged to dis-

charge my magisterial functions in an open-air tribunal on that marble pavement your feet so often trod.

"They fear us and they despise us. Yet is not Rome the mother and warden of all these peoples who nestle smiling upon her venerable bosom? With her eagles in the van, peace and liberty have been carried to the very confines of the universe. Those whom we have subdued we look on as our friends, and we leave those conquered races, nay, we secure to them the permanence of their customs and their laws. Did Syria, aforetime rent asunder by its rabble of petty kings, ever even begin to taste of peace and prosperity until it submitted to the armies of Pompey? And when Rome might have reaped a golden harvest as the price of her goodwill, did she lay hands on the hoards that swell the treasuries of barbaric temples? Did she despoil the shrine of Cybele at Pessinus, or the Morimene and Cilician sanctuaries of Jupiter, or the temple of the Jewish god at Jerusalem? Antioch, Palmyra, and Apamea, secure despite their wealth, and no longer in dread of the wandering Arab of the desert, have erected temples to the genius of Rome and the divine Cæsar. The Jews alone hate and withstand us. They withhold their tribute till it is wrested from them, and obstinately rebel against military service."

"The Jews," replied Lamia, "are profoundly attached to their ancient customs. They suspected you, unreasonably I admit, of a desire to abolish their laws and change their usages. Do not resent it, Pontius, if I say that you did not always act in such a way as to disperse their unfortunate illusion. It gratified you, despite your habitual self-restraint, to play upon their fears, and more than once have I seen you betray in their presence the contempt with which their beliefs and religious ceremonies inspired you. You irritated them particularly by giving instructions for the sacerdotal garments and ornaments of their high priest to be kept in ward by your legionaries in the Antonine tower. One must admit that though they have never risen like us to an appreciation of things divine, the Jews celebrate rites which their very antiquity renders venerable."

Pontius Pilate shrugged his shoulders.

"They have very little exact knowledge of the nature of the gods," he said. "They worship Jupiter, yet they abstain from naming him or erecting a statue of him. They do not even adore him under the semblance of a rude stone, as certain of the Asiatic peoples are wont to do. They know nothing of Apollo, of Neptune, of Mars, nor of Pluto, nor of any goddess. At the same time, I am convinced that in days gone by they worshipped Venus. For even to this day their women bring doves to the altar as victims; and you know as well as I that the dealers who trade beneath the arcades of their temple supply those birds in couples for sacrifice. I have even been told that on one occasion some madman proceeded to overturn the stalls bearing these offerings, and their owners with them. The priests raised an outcry about it, and looked on it as a case of sacrilege. I am of opinion that their custom of sacrificing turtle-doves was instituted in honour of Venus. Why are you laughing, Lamia?"

"I was laughing," said Lamia, "at an amusing idea which, I hardly know how, just occurred to me. I was thinking that perchance some day the Jupiter of the Jews might come to Rome and vent his fury upon you. Why should he not? Asia and Africa have already enriched us with a considerable number of gods. We have seen temples in honour of Isis and the dog-faced Anubis erected in Rome. In the public squares, and even on the race-courses, you may run across the Bona Dea of the Syrians mounted on an ass. And did you never hear how, in the reign of Tiberius, a young patrician passed himself off as the horned Jupiter of the Egyptians, Jupiter Ammon, and in this disguise procured the favours of an illustrious lady who was too virtuous to deny anything to a god? Beware, Pontius, lest the invisible Jupiter of the Jews disembark some day on the quay at Ostia!"

At the idea of a god coming out of Judæa, a fleeting smile played over the severe countenance of the Procurator. Then he replied gravely:

"How would the Jews manage to impose their sacred law on outside peoples when they are in a perpetual state of

tumult amongst themselves as to the interpretation of that law? You have seen them yourself, Lamia, in the public squares, split up into twenty rival parties, with staves in their hands, abusing each other and clutching one another by the beard. You have seen them on the steps of the temple, tearing their filthy garments as a symbol of lamentation, with some wretched creature in a frenzy of prophetic exaltation in their midst. They have never realized that it is possible to discuss peacefully and with an even mind those matters concerning the divine which yet are hidden from the profane and wrapped in uncertainty. For the nature of the immortal gods remains hidden from us, and we cannot arrive at a knowledge of it. Though I am of opinion, none the less, that it is a prudent thing to believe in the providence of the gods. But the Jews are devoid of philosophy, and cannot tolerate any diversity of opinions. On the contrary, they judge worthy of the extreme penalty all those who on divine subjects profess opinions opposed to their law. And as, since the genius of Rome has towered over them, capital sentences pronounced by their own tribunals can only be carried out with the sanction of the proconsul or the procurator, they harry the Roman magistrate at any hour to procure his signature to their baleful decrees, they besiege the pretorium with their cries of 'Death!' A hundred times, at least, have I known them, mustered, rich and poor together, all united under their priests, make a furious onslaught on my ivory chair, seizing me by the skirts of my robe, by the thongs of my sandals, and all to demand of me—nay, to exact from me—the death sentence on some unfortunate whose guilt I failed to perceive, and as to whom I could only pronounce that he was as mad as his accusers. A hundred times, do I say! Not a hundred, but every day and all day. Yet it was my duty to execute their law as if it were ours, since I was appointed by Rome not for the destruction, but for the upholding of their customs, and over them I had the power of the rod and the axe. At the outset of my term of office I endeavoured to persuade them to hear reason. I attempted to snatch their miserable victims from death. But this

show of mildness only irritated them the more; they demanded their prey, fighting around me like a horde of vultures with wing and beak. Their priests reported to Cæsar that I was violating their law, and their appeals, supported by Vitellius, drew down upon me a severe reprimand. How many times did I long, as the Greeks used to say, to dispatch accusers and accused in one convoy to the crows!

"Do not imagine, Lamia, that I nourish the rancour of the discomfited, the wrath of the superannuated, against a people which in my person has prevailed against both Rome and tranquillity. But I foresee the extremity to which sooner or later they will reduce us. Since we cannot govern them, we shall be driven to destroy them. Never doubt it. Always in a state of insubordination, brewing rebellion in their inflammatory minds, they will one day burst forth upon us with a fury beside which the wrath of the Numidians and the mutterings of the Parthians are mere child's play. They are secretly nourishing preposterous hopes, and madly premeditating our ruin. How can it be otherwise, when, on the strength of an oracle, they are living in expectation of the coming of a prince of their own blood whose kingdom shall extend over the whole earth? There are no half measures with such a people. They must be exterminated. Jerusalem must be laid waste to the very foundation. Perchance, old as I am, it may be granted me to behold the day when her walls shall fall and the flames shall envelop her houses, when her inhabitants shall pass under the edge of the sword, when salt shall be strewn on the place where once the temple stood. And in that day I shall at length be justified."

Lamia exerted himself to lead the conversation back to a less acrimonious note.

"Pontius," he said, "it is not difficult for me to understand both your long-standing resentment and your sinister forebodings. Truly, what you have experienced of the character of the Jews is nothing to their advantage. But I lived in Jerusalem as an interested onlooker, and mingled freely with the people, and I succeeded in detecting certain obscure virtues in these rude folk which were altogether hid-

den from you. I have met Jews who were all mildness, whose simple manners and faithfulness of heart recalled to me what our poets have related concerning the Spartan lawgiver. And you yourself, Pontius, have seen perish beneath the cudgels of your legionaries simple-minded men who have died for a cause they believed to be just without revealing their names. Such men do not deserve our contempt. I am saying this because it is desirable in all things to preserve moderation and an even mind. But I own that I never experienced any lively sympathy for the Jews. The Jewess, on the contrary, I found extremely pleasing. I was young, then, and the Syrian women stirred all my senses to response. Their ruddy lips, their liquid eyes that shone in the shade, their sleepy gaze pierced me to the very marrow. Painted and stained, smelling the nard and myrrh, steeped in odours, their physical attractions are both rare and delightful."

Pontius listened impatiently to these praises.

"I was not the kind of man to fall into the snares of the Jewish women," he said; "and since you have opened the subject yourself, Lamia, I was never able to approve of your laxity. If I did not express with sufficient emphasis formerly how culpable I held you for having intrigued at Rome with the wife of a man of consular rank, it was because you were then enduring heavy penance for your misdoings. Marriage from the patrician point of view is a sacred tie; it is one of the institutions which are the support of Rome. As to foreign women and slaves, such relations as one may enter into with them would be of little account were it not that they habituate the body to a humiliating effeminacy. Let me tell you that you have been too liberal in your offerings to the Venus of the Marketplace; and what, above all, I blame in you is that you have not married in compliance with the law and given children to the Republic, as every good citizen is bound to do."

But the man who had suffered exile under Tiberius was no longer listening to the venerable magistrate. Having tossed off his cap of Falernian, he was smiling at some image visible to his eye alone.

After a moment's silence he resumed in a very deep voice, which rose in pitch by little and little:

"With what languorous grace they dance, those Syrian women! I knew a Jewess at Jerusalem who used to dance in a poky little room, on a threadbare carpet, by the light of one smoky little lamp, waving her arms as she clanged her cymbals. Her loins arched, her head thrown back, and, as it were, dragged down by the weight of her heavy red hair, her eyes swimming with voluptuousness, eager, languishing, compliant, she would have made Cleopatra herself grow pale with envy. I was in love with her barbaric dances, her voice—a little raucous and yet so sweet—her atmosphere of incense, the semi-somnolent state in which she seemed to live. I followed her everywhere. I mixed with the vile rabble of soldiers, conjurers, and extortioners with which she was surrounded. One day, however, she disappeared, and I saw her no more. Long did I seek her in disreputable alleys and taverns. It was more difficult to learn to do without her than to lose the taste for Greek wine. Some months after I lost sight of her, I learned by chance that she had attached herself to a small company of men and women who were followers of a young Galilean thaumaturgist. His name was Jesus; he came from Nazareth, and he was crucified for some crime, I don't quite know what. Pontius, do you remember anything about the man?"

Pontius Pilate contracted his brows, and his hand rose to his forehead in the attitude of one who probes the depths of memory. Then after a silence of some seconds:

"Jesus?" he murmured, "Jesus—of Nazareth? I cannot call him to mind."

THE IDYL OF AN OLD COUPLE

(*La Chanson des Vieux Époux*)

By PIERRE LOTI

TOTO-SAN and Kaka-San were husband and wife. They were old—so old; everybody had always known them; the oldest people in Nagasaki did not even remember the time when they had seen them young. They begged in the streets. Toto-San, who was blind, dragged after him in a sort of small bath-chair Kaka-San, who was paralyzed. Formerly they were known as Hato-San and Oume-San (Monsieur Pigeon and Madame Prune), but the people no longer remembered this. In the Japanese language Toto and Kata are very soft words which signify “father” and “mother” in the mouths of children. Doubtless because of their great age, everybody called them so; and in this land of excessive politeness they added to these familiar names the word “San,” which is a word of courtesy like monsieur and madame (*Monsieur Papa* and *Madame Maman*). Even the smallest Japanese babies do not neglect these terms of politeness. Their method of begging was discrete and *comme il faut*. They did not harass the passers-by with prayers, but held out their hands simply and without saying anything—poor hands, wrinkled and already like those of a mummy. The people gave them rice, heads of fish, old soups. Very small, like all Japanese women, Kaka-San appeared reduced almost to nothing in this chair, in which her lower limbs, almost dead, had been dried up and huddled together for so many years. Her carriage was badly hung; and thus it came to be much

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jolted in the course of its journeys through the city. He did not walk very quickly, her poor husband, and he was so full of care and precaution. She guided him with her voice, and he, attentive, his ear pricked up, went on his way, like the Wandering Jew, in his everlasting darkness, the leather rein thrown over his shoulder and striking the ground with a bamboo cane to direct his steps.

They went to all the religious festivals celebrated in the temples. Under the great black cedars, which shade the sacred meadows, at the foot of some old monster in granite, they installed themselves at an early hour before the arrival of the earliest devotees, and so long as the pilgrimage lasted, many of the passers-by stopped at their side. They were young girls with the faces of dolls, and little eyes like cats, dragging after them their high boots of wood; Japanese children, very funny in their long parti-coloured dresses, arriving in bands to pay their devotions and holding each other by their hands; beautiful simpering ladies, with complicated chignons, going to the pagoda to pray and to laugh; peasants with long hair, Bonzes or merchants, every imaginable description of these gay little doll-people passed before Kata-San, who still was able to see them, and Toto-San, who was not. They always gave them a kind look, and sometimes somebody would detach himself from a group to give them some alms. Sometimes even they made them bows, quite as if they were people of quality—so well were they known, and so polite is everybody in this Empire.

In those days it often happened that they could smile at the feast when the weather was fine and the breeze soft, when the sorrows of old age slumbered a little in their exhausted limbs. Kaka-San, excited by the tumult of the laughing and light voices, began to simper like the passing ladies, playing with her poor fan of paper, assuming the air of one who still had something to say to life, and who interested herself like other people in the amusing things of this world.

But when evening came, bringing darkness and chill under the cedars, when there was everywhere a sense of religious horror and mystery around the temples, in the alleys

lined with monsters, the old couple sank back on themselves. It seemed as if the fatigues of the day had gnawed them from within; their wrinkles became deeper, their skin hung more loosely; their faces expressed only their frightful misery and the hideous idea of the nearness of death.

Meantime, thousands of lamps were lit around them in the black branches; and the devout held their places on the steps of the temples. The hum of a gayety, at once frivolous and strange, came from this crowd, filled the avenues and the holy vaults, in sharp contrast with the sinister grin of the immobile monsters who guard the gods—with the frightful and unknown symbols—with the vague terrors of the night. The feast was prolonged till daylight, and seemed an immense irony to the spirits of heaven rather than an act of adoration; but an irony that had no bitterness, that was child-like amiable, and, above all things, irresistibly joyous.

But this affected not the old couple. With the setting of the sun there was nothing which could animate any longer those human wrecks. They became sinister to look at; huddled up, apart from everybody else, like sick pariahs or old monkeys, worn out and done for, eating in a corner their poor little alms-offerings. At this moment were they disturbed by something profound and eternal, else why was there this expression of anguish on their death-masks? Who knows what passed in their old Japanese heads? Perhaps nothing at all. They struggled simply to keep on living; they ate with their little chop-sticks, helping each other tenderly. They covered each other up so as not to get cold and to keep the dew from penetrating to their bones. They took care of each other as much as they with the simple desire of being alive the next day, and of recommencing their old wandering promenade, the one rolling the other's chair. In the little chair Kaka-San kept all their household effects, broken dishes of blue porcelain for their rice, little cups to drink their tea, and lanterns of red paper which they lit at night.

Once every week, Kaka-San's hair was carefully combed and dressed by her beloved husband. Her arms she could

not quite raise high enough to fix her Japanese chignon, and Toto-San had learned to do it instead. Trembling and fumbling, he caressed the poor old head, which allowed itself to be stroked with coquettish abandon, and the whole thing recalled—except that it was sadder—the toilette which the humbugs help each other to make. Her hair was thin; and Toto-San did not find much to comb on her poor yellow parchment, wrinkled like the skin of an apple in winter. He succeeded, however, in fixing up her hair in puffs, after the Japanese fashion: and she, deeply interested in the operation, followed it with her eyes in a broken piece of a mirror, with: "A little higher, Toto-San." "A little more to the right." "A little to the left." In the end, when he had stuck two long pins in, which gave to the coiffure its finishing touch, Kaka-San seemed to regain the air of a genteel grandmother, a profile like that of a well-bred woman.

They also went through their ablutions conscientiously: for they are very clean in Japan.

And when they had finished these ablutions once more, which had been done so often already during so many years; when they had completed that toilette, which the approach of death rendered less grateful from day to day—did they feel themselves vivified by the pure and cold water? did they experience a little more comfort in the freshness of the morning?

Ah! what a depth of wretchedness was theirs! After each night, to wake up both more infirm, more depressed, more shaky, and in spite of it all, to wish obstinately to live on, to display their decrepitude to the sun, and to set out in the same eternal promenade in their bath-chair; with the same long pauses, the same creaks of the wood, the same joltings, the same fatigue; to pass even through the streets, into the suburbs, through the valleys, even to the distant country where a festival was announced in some temple in the woods.

It was in the fields one morning, at the crossing of two of the Royal roads, that death suddenly caught old Kaka-San. It was a beautiful morning in April; the sun was

shining brightly, and the grass was very green. In the island of Kiu-Tiu the spring is a little warmer than ours, comes earlier, and already everything was resplendent in the fertile fields. The two roads crossed each other in the midst of the fields; all around was the rice-crop glistening under the light breeze in innumerable changes of colour. The air was filled with the music of the grasshoppers, which in Japan are loud in their buzz. At this spot were about ten tombs in the grass under a bunch of large and isolated cedars. Square stone pillars, or ancient Buddhas in granite, were set up in the cups of the lotus. Beyond the fields of rice, you saw the woods, not unlike our wood of oak. But here and there were white or rose-coloured clumps, which were the camelias in flower, and the light foliage of the bamboos. Then farther off were the mountains, resembling small domes with little cupolas, forming against the sky shapes that seemed artificial, yet very agreeable.

It was in the midst of this region of calm and verdure that the chair of Kaka-San stopped, and for a halt that was to be its last. Peasants, men and woman, dressed in their long dresses of dark blue cotton with pagoda sleeves—about twenty good little Japanese souls—hurried to the bath-chair where the old dying woman was convulsively twisting her old arms. She had had a stroke quite suddenly while being drawn along by Toto-San on a pilgrimage to the temple of the goddess Kwanon.

They, good souls, did their best, attracted by sympathy as much as by curiosity, to help the old woman. They were for the most part people who, like her, were making their way to the feast of Kwanon, the Goddess of Beauty. Poor Kaka-San! They attempted to restore her with a cordial made of rice brandy; they rubbed the pit of her stomach with aromatic herbs, and bathed the back of her neck with the fresh water of a stream. Toto-San touched her quite gently, caressed her timidly, not knowing what to do, embarrassing the others with his awkward blind movements, and trembling with anguish in all his limbs.

Finally, they made her swallow, in small pellets, pieces of paper which contained efficacious prayers written on them

by the Bonzes, and which a helpful woman had consented to take from the lining of her own sleeves. Labour in vain! for the hour had struck. Death was there, invisible, laughing in the face of all these good Japanese, and holding the old woman tight in his secure hands.

A last painful convulsion and Kaka-San was dead. Her mouth lay open, her body all on one side, half fallen out of the chair, and her arms hanging like the doll of a poor Punch and Judy show, which is allowed to rest at the close of the performance.

This little shaded cemetery, before which the final scene had taken place, seemed to be indicated by the Spirits themselves, and even to have been chosen by the dead woman herself. They made no delay. They hired some coolies who were passing, and very quickly they began to dig out the earth. Everybody was in a hurry, not wishing to miss the pilgrimage nor to leave this poor old thing without burial—the more so as the day promised to be very hot, and already some ugly flies were gathering round. In half an hour the grave was ready. They took the old woman from her chair, lifting her by the shoulders, and placed her in the earth, seated as she had always been, her lower limbs huddled together as they had been in life—like one of those dried-up monkeys which sportsmen meet sometimes at the foot of trees in the forest. Toto-San tried to do everything himself, no longer in his right senses, and hindering the coolies, who have not sensitive hearts, and who hustled him about. He groaned like a little child, and tears ran from his eyes without exciting any attention. He tried to find out if at least her hair was properly combed to present herself in the eternal dwellings, if the bows of her hair were in order, and he wished to replace the large pins in her head-dress before they threw the earth over her.

They heard a slight groaning in the foliage; it was the spirits of Kaka-San's ancestors who had come to receive her on her entrance into the Country of Shadows. Toto-San yoked himself to the bath-chair once more; once more started out, from the sheer habit of walking and of dragging

something after him. Separated from her who had been his friend, adviser, his intelligence and his eyes, he went about without thought, a mournful wreck, irrevocably alone on earth to the very end, no longer capable of collecting his thoughts, moving timidly without object and without hope, in night blacker than ever before. In the meantime the grasshoppers sang at their shrillest in the grass, which darkened under the stars; and whilst real night gathered around the old blind man, one heard already in the branches the same groanings as earlier while the burial was taking place. They were the murmurs of the spirits who said: "Console thyself, Toto-San. She rests in a very sweet sort of annihilation where we also are and whither thou com'st soon. She is no longer old nor tottering, for she is dead; nor ugly to look upon, since she is hidden in the roots underground; nor disgusting to anybody, since she has become the fertilizing substance of the land. Her body will be purified, permeating the earth; Kaka-San will live again in beautiful Japanese plants; in the branches of the cedar, in the beautiful camelias—in the bamboo."

ATTITUDES

(*Les Gestes*)

By PAUL BOURGET

I

WHEN Madame Izelin had glanced at the card which the concierge of the hotel handed her, together with her letters, and had read thereon the name of Lucien Salvan, her usually thoughtful and reserved face, of a woman of forty-five, expressed a surprise almost violent enough to be called a shock; and she at once slipped the card into the guide-book that she held in her hand, fearing lest her daughter Jeanne, who had lingered to select some flowers outside the door, might question her. But even when the latter appeared, bringing a handful of fresh primroses, those fresh Neapolitan primroses with which the sellers of bouquets besiege one's carriage-door in Naples,—and beautifully did they harmonise with her blonde grace,—the mother had not yet entirely recovered her composure, and the girl asked:—

“But what is the matter, mamma? Have you had bad news?”

“I have not even looked at my letters,” Madame Izelin said, forcing a smile, while Jeanne resumed, with solicitude in her voice and an anxiety in her blue eyes which seemed to reveal the most exalted affection:—

“If you're not well, let us get back to Paris as soon as possible, and give up Rome and Florence. Do not think of me. Think of yourself. Your health is my very life to me.

Translated by William Marchant. Copyright, 1902, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

I love art passionately, but I love you more than I do Michelangelo or Raphael."

"I am perfectly well," the mother replied, with a kind of vexation, as if the daughter's tone in the inquiry about her health—a tone so affectionate it seemed—had displeased her. "*Tiens!* here is a letter from your cousin Julie," she continued, after having looked at the different addresses. And while Jeanne took the envelope and tore it open with a joyous curiosity now upon her expressive face, the mother continued to examine her closely with a singular look, and held tight in her hand the book containing the visiting card which had so deeply agitated her.

They had entered the lift, which was now slowly ascending toward the fourth floor, where they had their rooms. The young girl kept on reading her letter, interrupting it by commentaries addressed to her companion:—

"They have had a grand ball at the Le Prieux', mamma; Julie writes that it was very amusing. There is talk of Edgard Faucherot's marriage to Jacqueline Lounet. They are going to wear *boleros* very short this season, it seems. What luck for me—with my figure!"

"No," the mother said, five minutes later, when, alone in her room, she was again free to give herself up to the thoughts that the sight of the name engraved upon the card had awakened in her, "it is not possible that she has anything to do with this young man's coming here. All her letters pass through my hands. Besides, does she care for him? Does she care for anything but herself, and to produce an effect? Just now she had the air of being concerned about my health. If any one had seen her, in the hall, asking me, with those eyes, with that voice, 'Is anything the matter with you, mamma?' he would have believed that she was anxious that she loved me. 'Do not think of me!' she said, speaking of Rome and Florence; and she spoke of Michelangelo and Raphael! She, who looks at nothing and feels nothing!"

Then, continuing her inward monologue: "Is it her fault? And have I the right to be vexed with her when I know so well that she inherits this frightful fault, this lack of truth,

this eternal playing a part? And am I just? It is her way of feeling. Alas! I have seen too often, with her father, what it all leads to,—this taste for attitude and effect,—to what egotism, to what falsehood! I did not see it when I married him, any more than this unlucky young man sees the character of Jeanne! How he loves her—that he could not endure our departure! If he knew that she has not spoken of him once, that she has not given him a moment's thought! It must be of his own accord that he came, that he discovered where we were! How he loves her! The poor lad!"

She had taken out the card from the guide-book, as she sat reflecting thus, and spelled out with her eyes the name of the young man on whose account she had hurriedly, five weeks before, carried her daughter off from Paris, first to Sicily and then to Naples, impelled by impressions and scruples which made part of the deep history of her life. What this life had been, and through how many sad hours it had passed, the premature gray of her hair, the prematurely wrinkled eyelids plainly told. She must have been pretty, very differently from her daughter, with something modest, timid, retiring, in her appearance. Her features, bearing the impress of age, remained extremely delicate. She still had beautiful teeth, beautiful eyes that were very soft, which sometimes,—too rarely,—when she smiled frankly lighted up with a youthful, and almost childish, splendour. The half-mourning, which she had not laid aside, after two years of widowhood, made her colouring look like ivory. Her figure remained slender and lithe; and, though she had not a drop of noble blood in her veins,—her father, whose very plebeian name was Dupuis, had made his fortune as a wholesale dealer in wood at Bercy,—her feet and hands would have caused envy to more than one authentic duchess. With this she also had, as it were diffused over all her person, that indefinable melancholy of women who have never been loved.

If her daughter, at that moment occupied in the next room in arranging her flowers in her vases, while going over in a half-voice a Neapolitan song, destined to be endlessly re-

peated, with piano accompaniment, in Paris, had opened the door a crack, and studied, in the verity of her expression, this mother whom she affected to love so much, possibly a true emotion might for once have seized her, on seeing how much this face, habitually so fatigued, had grown sadder still while she turned over and over in her slender fingers the supple oblong of pasteboard.

The splendid landscape visible through the window—that Bay of Naples with its soft curves, the purity of its sky and water, the graceful sweep of its volcano, its bright-coloured cities along its luminous shore, its sails so white upon its sea so blue—gave to this face of an anxious woman a setting which still further increased its pathetic expression. At last, and as if awaking from a very sad dream, the widow passed her hand over her eyes; she sighed heavily, and looked at the clock. It was now quarter to twelve. Breakfast would be served at half-past twelve. She unlocked a drawer and took out her writing-case, wherein lay a letter already partly written, very long, and evidently taken up from time to time; she re-read it, now and then shaking her head, as with a feeling of the uselessness of what she had written; and, after assuring herself that her daughter, now also herself seated at a table in the adjacent room and about to write up the journal of her so-called “impressions of travel,” would probably not interrupt her, she returned to go on with this letter, written to the only one of her friends to whom she gave her complete confidence. These pages will explain, better than any commentary, both the nature of the relations between this woman and this girl, and the singular moral tragedy of her own life in which the presence of Lucien Salvan at Naples and his call at the hotel made a novel and decisive episode.

NAPLES, MARCH 17, 1897.

Your reproaches, my dear friend, on the subject of my long silence touch me. To have the heart's second sight, as you have it toward me, your friendship for me must be very strong—strong even to the extent of being a little unjust. But it is a sweet injustice. One has need sometimes

to feel one's self loved too much, loved with a sensitiveness unknown to lukewarm affections. You know whether I have been over-indulged in this regard. Know also, know always, that I appreciate your sympathy as it deserves. Fortunate as you are in your husband, your children, your grandchildren, that you should have been interested, as you have been, in a solitary woman, who was but an acquaintance, is the proof of a tender-heartedness for which it would be inhuman in me to be ungrateful.

I am not so, be assured; and if I left Paris without seeing you, without talking over with you the plan of this journey about which you express anxiety, it was because certain griefs are shy in their nature, even toward—especially toward—friends whose esteem one would carefully avoid alienating from other persons. You understand from these few words that my poor Jeanne is concerned in this resolution which I suddenly formed of leaving home for an absence of some weeks, perhaps months. But do not hastily suppose that the child has done anything deserving of blame. There are moments when I ask myself if it is not I who am in fault, and whether I have truly fulfilled toward her, in this affair, a mother's duty. But could I better respond to your tender solicitude, dear friend, than by making you yourself the judge of the troubles through which I have passed, of the reflections resulting from them, and of the method by which I have escaped from a difficulty which, whatever its cause may have been, is now so probably a thing of the past that what I write you is merely retrospective history. Still, I intend to relate it to you, though at the risk of repeating things in regard to which I have often talked with you before. Do not expect anything extraordinary. Who is it that says, "Dramas of the heart have no events?"

We have so often spoken of my daughter that I do not need to tell you that my difficulty again arises from the peculiarity of my relations with her. Permit me to recall them to you, so that the whole may be clear and definite in your mind. To do this will be a solace, while it also will cause me pain.

You knew her father, and you know what the martyrdom of my life with him was. God forbid that I should ever confuse a child, all inexperience, all simplicity, with a man so deeply, so thoroughly corrupt. That Monsieur Izelin married me solely for my fortune; that he never had in his heart the shadow of a shade of affection for me, while I, on my part, gave myself to him with a passion of which this day's lament—after so many years, after death—is still a proof; that he betrayed me, exploited, humiliated, crushed me—I should be guilty indeed if I felt ill-will toward his daughter on this account, and threw upon her the responsibility for a resemblance which is no fault of hers! That she has his eyes, his hair, his colouring, his gestures, his voice—that I find again in her, under a feminine form, that grace of trait and manner by which I was so foolishly caught—would be only a reason for loving her better—in memory of my past illusions! But the resemblance, as I have often said to you, goes much farther. I have also explained to you how the misery of my married life was less in the actions which made me their victim than in the states of feeling that they manifested. Monsieur Izelin might have been even more faithless and more brutal than he was, I should have been less unhappy had he not kept, through all his faults, that faculty of simulation which deceived so many people, as it had deceived me when I was very young; which, at first, deceived even yourself, the acutest mind, the best endowed with discernment that I know. You remember, too, how this man, so selfish and hard, always had the right words to say, the right attitude to assume, in relation to whatever came up; how he excelled in the impersonation of scrupulousness! If a story of villany were related in his presence, how he grew indignant; or some noble act, how he admired it! If the talk was of a book, a picture, a play, how fine and pure his taste appeared! If a character were discussed, how he was indulgent or severe, with an equity which gave those who heard him the idea of conscience so lofty, so wise! This simulation was of all my miseries the worst. It was from a horror of this false show that I formed that habit of reserve with which you have sometimes

reproached me, that difficulty in giving expression to my own feelings, that aversion from every manifested emotion, which you have at times regarded as coldness. I had suffered too much from that duality of my husband not to mistrust, everywhere and always, that which once you called—using a word that I have not forgotten—attitudes of the soul. One can assume them so often, so gracefully, so appropriately, and feel so little!

It was only late in his life that you met Monsieur Izelin, at a time when this gift of conceiving and expressing refined feelings, without experiencing them at all, had become a frightful, a criminal hypocrisy, serving to hide under a noble exterior a frightful degradation of character. It had not always been so. Even in the earliest days of our married life, while he was for me an absolutely blameless husband, I began to notice this complete, radical divorce in him between feeling and expression, this instinct for pose, which made him involuntarily, without effort, by a sort of irresistible histrionic inclination, assume a certain character for the purpose of producing a desired effect. Before being an actor with an end to gain, he was an actor for the mere pleasure of it. And why? In describing to you, yet again, this character, of which I made, to my cost, so prolonged a study, I am still incapable of answering this question. Is there, in some natures, an inner aridness which incapacitates them for any deep, simple, genuine emotion, and with it an imaginative power which makes them believe that they feel, and so they trick themselves first, and, later, others? And then, do these insincere, complicated natures let themselves be carried away by the desire to please, or by vanity, or by self-interest, to increase this original fault? They were factitious; they become false. They are nothing but perfidy and calculation; but they began by being almost spontaneous in their insincerity. This passage from artifice to falsehood is my husband's whole moral history. And all my history—mine with my daughter—is, since I first observed in her, as a child, touches of character so like her father's, a terror lest the resemblance become complete. For any other mother than I this facility of Jeanne's in transform-

ing herself at the will of the persons she desires to please, this knowing what words to use, what manner to assume, while yet she feels nothing at all of what she expresses, this gift of *attitudes*, which contrasts so much, when one knows her well, with her interior indifference; for any other person than myself these would be only a young girl's queer ways, sure to pass off as she grew older.

I have too carefully watched these tendencies not to be aware that they do but grow with her; and her father's destiny is too constantly present to my mind for me to accept carelessly what I believe, what I know, to be an actual malformation of soul. I have so striven against this, since first I perceived it in her, and always in vain! I have so endeavoured to break up this spontaneous lying, to hinder the child's playing to herself the part of emotions that she does not feel! I have so laboured to render her simple and sincere; and I have so felt that there was, in the inmost structure of her being, an innate element, a something primitive and indestructible, that she is born an actress as you and I are born sincere, perhaps because,—I, her mother, shudder to write it,—perhaps because she has no heart, and never will have one.

I have gone on talking to you thus, at such length, as if I had not confessed these miseries to you many a time before. Pardon me, and see in this a sign that I am greatly agitated at this moment and the depths of my memory are stirred. And, then, to repeat to you all these things is to plead for myself, in advance, in the affair I am about to relate to you, and of which this journey into Italy is the episode. I have said "the affair," but the word will seem to you too serious when you discover to what it is applied. Nor will you any better understand, at first, why I did not tell you of my solicitude when it first began, and why I do tell you of it now. The truth is, I hesitated long before yielding to it myself; and, then, I had seen you but little this winter since you were in mourning, and I am laying mine aside while Jeanne is entering society this year. You will remember that I always dreaded this period in her life? With the character that I believe I see in her, everything

for her, more than for any other girl, depends upon her marriage; and a marriage depends so often on this first year in society—the impression a young girl produces, and the young men whom she meets.

Will you be surprised when I tell you that she has had much success and also has shown much tact and manner?—too much for my taste. She, toward whom her father was so harsh, and who mourned so little for him,—you remember how I suffered from that, in spite of everything?—she has carried into all her gayeties that reserved air of a daughter who, left alone with a widowed mother, lives upon a footing of concealed sadness. You know how I feared she might imitate her cousins, who are good girls, but with that detestable tone of the flighty young woman of the present day. On the contrary, Jeanne has made it her affair not to be like them. She, who since she began to think at all, has never taken an interest in anything but the bits of Parisian life that by chance came within her reach; she has found out, through this genius for simulation that is in her, that the secret of success is to appear as serious, as old-fashioned, as the others are lively and “new-century,” to use their own expression. You will say that I am hard to please, and that causes are of no consequence, provided the result is good. Granted that a young girl has this dignity from vanity—the principal thing is, that she have it.

And, indeed, I should have reasoned thus myself if this little scheme of Jeanne’s had not resulted in awakening the most passionate interest in the young man whom I would least wish to see her marry, from a reason which is precisely the subject of my scruples, and of which you alone, my dear friend and devoted confidant, will understand the origin and the nature.

This young man, whom you do not know, but whose name you have certainly heard, on account of his father, is M. Lucien Salvan. He is the son of Dr. Salvan, the specialist in nervous diseases. This means, as you see, of course, that he will one day be rich, and also that his family belong to that position in life in which it is my ardent wish that Jeanne

should remain. I have too fully experienced, in her father's case, how wise is the old custom of marrying in one's own station, with absolute equality as to fortune and birth. If Monsieur Izelin had not been the son of a woman of noble family, who had felt herself deprived of her social position by her marriage with a plebeian, he might not have had that lack of balance which was increased by his marriage with me—he, the half-artist, very close to the aristocracy, I, the daughter of a man in trade, very close to the people. As regards social conditions, therefore, Monsieur Salvan would correspond perfectly to all that I desire. With this, without being noticeably handsome, he is a man of very good presence. He has a pleasant face and agreeable manners. He has the reputation of being a worker, and has just passed his legal examinations brilliantly. His father and his mother—he resembles the latter especially, whom you would like—leave him free as to his career, and there can be no doubt that he will succeed in whatever one he may choose. This is the portrait of an ideal son-in-law, is it not? And because it is so, I ask myself if, in ardently desiring that this marriage shall not take place, I have not been seriously unfaithful toward my daughter. Do not think I have lost my reason; have patience to read to the end.

I had not much difficulty, as you will easily suppose, in discovering that this young man was interested in Jeanne. The lover's tricks are always the same. No sooner had this one been presented to us than he began, as being the correct thing, to be as devoted to me as he was to her. This is classic. It is equally so that I strove to profit by his assiduities to study his character. The trait which struck me at once, no doubt because I recognised in it a close and singular resemblance to myself, was this difficulty of expression, this kind of shyness which feeling only increased, this reserve under the eye of others, this sensitiveness, all the more intimidated the more it is intense, manifesting itself so much the less the more it touched.

I have said to you that Lucien Salvan resembles his mother. He has her refined and distinguished manner, with a firmness of will that reminds one of his father. But the

interest which had so much terrified me had yielded to absence. *Eh bien!* he has followed us. He is in Naples. This morning I have just received his card. This afternoon, this evening, to-morrow, he will see Jeanne again. Jeanne will see him. Dear friend, I implore you, write to me; tell me which way it seems to you that my duty lies, as woman and mother.

If you think that I have been the victim of an unreasonable scruple, in considering myself obliged to do all that is possible to prevent this marriage, which I believe must be disastrous for a man who, after all, is to me a stranger, your conscience will tranquillize mine. I am extremely disturbed by the certainty which I now feel that this young man loves my daughter.

How I wish you were with me; how much you are needed by your friend, who embraces you most tenderly!

MATHILDE IZELIN.

II

WHILE Madame Izelin, having closed her letter and sent it off, was asking herself whether or not she should mention to her daughter the visit of the young man whose presence in Naples she regretted for the complex reasons which have been summed up in these pages, he himself was no less disturbed, but from causes of an order much more simple. The mother had made no mistake; Lucien Salvan was in love with Jeanne. The few weeks, which had followed the departure of the young girl, had been all the more insupportable to him, because he had not for a moment deceived himself as to the secret intention of this sudden journey. Madame Izelin desired in this way to interrupt a courtship so discreet that she had perhaps alone been aware of it. But that she had been aware of it the young man was certain. He could explain on no other supposition the change which he had noticed in her manner toward himself. After having shown a cordiality of welcome which had seemed to his hopes almost a permission to approach her daughter, he had suddenly become aware that coldness had taken the place of friendliness.

He had said to himself, "I have made some mistake, but in what?" The most scrupulous self-examination furnished him no reply. At twenty-five years of age, and though brought up in Paris, Lucien had retained—Madame Izelin was correct in her opinion—that feminine sensitiveness which reacts in suffering, from the least rough touch, instead of reacting in resistance. Beings thus made have need, for their hearts to open freely, of a complicity of good will around them. Hostility makes them shut themselves in; but, at the same time, stimulates and develops still more that energy of the soul's dream which is their constant temptation and their danger. No longer daring to manifest to Jeanne so openly the interest that he felt, Lucien gave himself up more to the lovely and chimerical idea that he formed of her for himself. Now that she was gone, and he could no longer ask himself each day when and how he could see her, his imaginative passion grew more and more intense. By force of turning over and over in his mind all possible data of the problem, he had arrived at this twofold conviction: first, that some one had cut the ground from under his feet with Madame Izelin—but who was it?—and, second, that the mother had planned some other marriage for her daughter. A name which he chanced to hear mentioned in the course of a conversation, that of a Monsieur de Barrois, the only young man of rank who frequented the society in which he had met Madame and Mademoiselle Izelin, had confirmed this suspicion in his mind. Four short sentences, thrown out at random, had sufficed to establish this mental certainty: "We don't see Monsieur de Barrois now."—"We shall see him again after Mademoiselle Izelin returns."—"Oh! is that what you think?"—"I think he is very fond of her, and that Mathilde would be quite willing to have her daughter a marquise. Imagine it, my dear!" These few words; the recollection, on the one hand, suddenly re-awakened, of a ball where Jeanne had danced several times with Monsieur de Barrois, and the recollection, on the other hand, of a certain look she had in speaking to himself; the feeling, in spite of all, of that first friendliness he had been conscious of in Madame Izelin—is there need of anything

more to explain why, being at liberty to take a journey, and having first spent a week on the Riviera, another project, alike simple and romantic, had sprung up in his mind? He knew, from other conversations, that Jeanne and her mother had gone away with the intention of visiting Naples and Sicily, and coming up to Rome for Holy Week. He considered it probable that they would begin their journey at the most southern point, and accordingly, three days before his visit to the hotel, he had arrived in Naples.

What should he now do? He did not know, nor even whether he should find those whom he sought; and when he had discovered after some hours of search that they were in a hotel on the Chiaja, very near his own, the rashness of his enterprise suddenly became apparent to him. For two days he had kept watch upon the movements of Madame Izelin and her daughter, concealed, like an evil-doer, in a corner from which he could see the door of this hotel, asking himself whether he should go openly and inquire for Madame Izelin or should present himself before them, as if by accident, in the street. Who has not known—who does not wish them back—those foolish uncertainties of love in its young days, when the reason tries to give a good account of that which is only the blind and tender instinct of the heart, starving for presence and sick with absence!

What Lucien Salvan wished most of all was to show Madame Izelin the reality of his feeling. He wanted to say to her, "Do not sacrifice me without giving me a hearing." How would he set about formulating this appeal? He did not know, any more than he knew whether that look of Jeanne's, which seemed to him the index of an emotion like his own, was anything else than childish pride at having pleased him so much. He had never dared to declare himself, and in the resolution of making this mad journey there lay, deeper still, the need to put matters to the test. If he found the young girl saddened by their separation, it would be that she loved him. He had not been able to judge of her mood in seeing her pass, which had happened to him twice in those two days—with what emotion. He had seen the elegant figure, the lithe step,

the complexion like a flower, the blonde hair. But he could not discern the expression of the features or of the eyes. Nor had he been able to judge the mother's face closely, only it appeared to him she was a little paler.

Finally he had become ashamed of his hesitations, and also a little afraid lest these ladies might leave the city without his having even spoken to them; and he had presented himself at their hotel that morning at eleven o'clock, with the idea that they would probably not be at home; but he would leave his card for them, and they would thus know of his presence. He happened upon a concierge, luckily, who was disposed to talk, and in reply to the question, "When should I be most likely to find Madame Izelin at home?" readily replied:—

"After breakfast, usually; but not to-day. These ladies are going to Pompeii at two o'clock."

Upon this the lover had left the hotel, and, as soon as he reached the sidewalk, had hailed a cab and had himself driven full speed to the railway station. A train would leave for Torre Annunziata a little before twelve. He had taken it; and while Madame Izelin, now seated at the breakfast table, continued to ask herself whether or not she should speak to her daughter of Lucien's visit, and how she herself should receive the young man, he had arrived at Pompeii. This had been done so impulsively, the conception and execution of the plan had been so closely mingled, that as he crossed the threshold of the dead city where he proposed to await Madame Izelin and her daughter, Salvan had a feeling that all this must be a dream. In less than twice thirty-five minutes, if he had been correctly informed, the two ladies would arrive by the same railway.

"They will know that I am in Naples. There will be nothing surprising in their meeting me here. I shall not seem to be looking for them. It will be equally natural that I should join them in their visit and that I should take the same train to return. And what a place in which to see Jeanne!"

While the lover thus reflected, he had walked in as far as the archway of the Porta Marina, and he had now before

his eyes that apparition unique in the whole world, that phantom-like apparition of the city smitten in the midst of its holiday, that Pompeii buried under ashes eighteen hundred years ago. He began to go along through the streets where the small gray houses, roofless and doorless, rear their walls, still covered in places with coloured stucco, and reveal the secret of the activities or the leisures of former times. There are shops, the counters hollowed into holes, with the jars all ready for the oil or wine; there are inner court-yards with colonnades; a fountain basin in which the jet of water no longer tinkles; walls whose frescos are half effaced. Elsewhere the hearth of a kitchen chimney still keeps its tripods and caldrons. Farther on, an empty well shows its curb worn by the hands that leaned upon it. There is a certain wall along which is tangled a leaden network of water-pipes, supported, as they are with us, by rings of metal soldered at regular intervals. The chariot wheels have worn deep ruts in the paving-stones of the street, and the high sidewalks seem still to await the foot-passenger who took refuge there to avoid the vehicles. Peristyles of temples remain in courts surrounded by porticos. Statues once adorned these courts; their great brick pedestals are yet standing; and everywhere, at the end of these streets, are the noble outlines of mountains—the Apennines, the hills of Castellamare; and in the bay the sea sparkles with its islands. The marvellous sagacity that the ancients employed in selecting the sites of their cities is revealed, and that need they had of the caress of extensive views. The pagan animal lived so much in the open air! So many pleasures were enjoyed in the open forum, the open theatre, the open amphitheatre! The landscape had its share in all that he did; and at Pompeii the grace of this landscape became formidable when he who walked in the street, looking over his shoulder, perceived behind him the assassin of this merry city—the ominous volcano. This dangerous, beautiful Vesuvius dominates this enormous heap of ruins with its broad-based, graceful triangle of dark, velvety slopes; and on its summit the plume of smoke sways in the wind, white, yet now and then reddened by the reflection of the subterranean flame. The im-

pression of the terrible destructive agencies of nature, thus lying close by the tokens of that human life so like our own, would fill the whole being with inexpressible alarm, were it not that the vast silence of the necropolis wraps us in a kind of peacefulness that is almost luxurious. It is the shudder in presence of the gloomy abyss of the tomb; and it is the charm of its long sleep. It is the stage-setting of a tragedy; and it is, with the profound azure of this sky and the radiance of this sunshine, a vision of beauty so tranquillizing! It seems as if the advice of the poets who were contemporaries of these vacant houses, these ruined temples, these obliterated paintings, were still whispered in the surrounding atmosphere—that advice to be happy while remembering always that this happiness will pass away, to mingle with the most intoxicating savours of life the bitter taste of death. It is the silver skeleton that Trimalchio's slave brings into the *triclinium* of a villa, doubtless exactly resembling this one of the Faunus or of the Vettii, while the rose-crowned guests repeat the Epicurean song: "We shall all be like this when Orcus has grasped us. Let us live, then, while it is permitted us to love!"

The special turn of his mind would have, at any time, disposed Lucien Salvan to receive very keen sensations from this strange Pompeian *décor*. To this, occasion added that indescribable, penetrating emotion which seizes us when the drama of our own personal destiny touches at some point a grand historic drama, and our individual happiness or unhappiness becomes a minute episode in an immense epic. It had been decreed that the tremendous eruption which terrified the ancient world should occur, that the ashes and scorice should be heaped up sixteen feet deep upon this gay city, that the kings of Naples and then the kings of Italy should have worked a century and a half at clearing up this colossal cemetery, in order that these remains of the ancient Greek colony might serve as a romantic scene for the meeting of the young man and the girl whom it was his dream to make his wife.

The interview promised to be decisive; of this Lucien was well aware. Either Madame Izelin would have told

her daughter that he was in Naples, and the young girl's way of receiving this news would be to him a sure sign of her feelings toward him; or Jeanne remained unaware of his presence, and if he could study her face before she saw him he would know what effect this separation of several weeks had had upon her. If he found her evidently sad, grown pale, with the traces of suffering like those which he could read in his own face in the glass, then—then, it would be that she loved him!

As the moments passed, the most contradictory hypotheses in regard to this very near arrival of the two ladies were sketched out in Lucien's imagination. He finally selected, just upon the hour for the train's arrival, a post of observation where he would be sure to see them, and with every chance in favour of not being seen by them. He took shelter, armed with his lorgnette, at the corner of the wall which separates the temple of Apollo from the via Marina, a very short distance from the sole entrance to the ruins. A few steps distant, on the opposite side of the street, was the enclosure of the Basilica, which it was almost certain would be the first place visited; thence they would come to this temple of Apollo, while he would have time to make his escape before they arrived, and would then await them in the Forum, which they would take next in order. And so he was there, seated on a step, looking no longer at the columns of the temple, with the beautiful acanthus leaves of their Corinthian capitals, nor at the blue sky in the spaces between them, nor at a Hermes still standing on his marble pedestal, in the folds of whose mantle agile, green-headed lizards were darting about, nor at anything except that via Marina, where the wave of tourists brought by the train was beginning to spread itself. What if, at the last moment, Madame Izelin had changed her plan for the afternoon? What if, having received his card, she had left the city? What if—— Suddenly Lucien's heart stood still. He had seen them. They came in, a little after the rest, conducted by one of the guardians. In the field of the little glass, which was not quite steady in his hand, Lucien had the mother's face and the daughter's, both animated at this instant by im-

pressions which suddenly caused him pain in that deep and unrecognized spot in the soul where we take cognizance of the infinitely small things of life. Madame Izelin's, which at first seemed veiled by some sad thought, began to express, from her first steps into this amazing city, a shock of surprise, in which Lucien recognized his own recent feeling. Her eyes rested upon this scene, whose poetry was unexpected by her, with that kind of poignant interest which he had himself experienced. Her features grew eager with that sympathetic attention that he would have been so glad to see in the face of Jeanne, that he might at once have with her a kind of secret communion. Instead, the delicate face of the young girl, at the moment simply natural because she did not know herself observed, was lighted with the amused smile of a child whom this poetry emanating from things does not reach at all. Lucien would have reproached himself with it, as with a crime, to wish that her face might bear some trace of sadness. And yet it was a blow to him to observe that, since leaving Paris, she had gained that air of health revealing the perfect development of a young organism which no painful emotion has disturbed. If she knew of his presence in Naples, evidently she was indifferent to it. If she did not know it, their separation was also to her a matter of indifference. Her brilliant, vivacious eyes regarded the ruins with a curiosity which had no other aim than to gratify the most innocent, but also the least romantic of whims. Jeanne held in her hand a small camera, and her one interest, during these first few minutes, was to find a good position for a snap-shot. Suddenly she stopped, and Lucien could see that she was "taking" first the Marina and then the door of the Basilica. It seemed to him—but was it not an effect of the imagination?—that the mother who looked on, also, at this child's play in which her daughter was employed, had around her mouth a half-smile of pity. Almost immediately the two disappeared behind the stone enclosure of the building, and Lucien himself walked toward the Forum.

"What is the change in her?" he was saying to himself. "She seems like another person to me. She does not know

that I am here, and her journey distracts her. That is all. It is perfectly natural, and I am an egoist."

Thus he reasoned with himself, leaning against one of the enormous masses of masonry which served as bases, the whole length of the Forum, for colossal equestrian statues. An hour earlier, upon entering this place, over which dominates the grand temple consecrated to Jupiter, he had been, even amid the anxiety of his expectation, penetrated by that imposing something, the atmosphere of Roman grandeur which forever floats over the place where have been engraved the letters of the sacred formula of the S.P.Q.R. No son of the Latin land has ever looked at them but that the blood of his ancestors thrilled within him. A veil was now drawn for him over these monuments, over this blue sky, over this history. He had now only one thought in his mind: "She is changed. What has happened?"

During these weeks of absence, the image of Jeanne, which he had never seen in its reality even when present, had still further been modified in his heart, to the point of becoming absolutely different from the actual person. And then, in Paris, every time he had met the young girl she, seeing herself observed by him, had so naturally exercised for his benefit her talent for attitudes! She had, by instinct and with an infallibly sure coquetry, posed for him as a child all emotion, all sensibility! She had made, with such subtle divination the soul-gestures which would fascinate him! Now, for the first time, he had surprised her unarmed, so to speak, just as she was by herself and unwatched; and for the first time, also, he had the intuition, faint as a presentiment, that he did not know this creature, even while believing himself so much in love with her. There were the same features, but there were no longer the same expressions. There was the same face, but not the same look. Lucien, however, had not time to analyse this vague, confused disappointment. Already the large, dark-blue straw hat trimmed with bluets and surmounted by a simple knot of crimson silk, which framed the delicate face of Jeanne, appeared at the end of the place, and her figure so slender in the travelling-dress of navy-blue serge, and her red para-

sol, matching the colour on her hat. At her side, always a little behind her, he recognized the mother's round hat with black and white trimming, her dress of steel-gray, her parasol also gray. In the difference of dress, even, the difference in character of the two was manifested: the one, always a little too brilliant and emphatic, the other, always a little too modest and reserved. But if, later, Lucien, as he remembered this arrival, was destined to make this observation, and to draw from it this conclusion, at the moment one single idea absorbed all others: if he wished to present himself to Madame Izelin, and accompany her and Jeanne in their walk through the ruins, he must decide, and at once. One last attack of timidity, one last effort, and he was in their presence.

The mother had been the first to see him. The little nervous shock which she experienced—as the young man saluted her and, with the most pathetic awkwardness, stammered a few words expressive of surprise—found outward manifestation only in the slightly dulled tone of her voice in reply. As for Jeanne, a little colour came into her cheeks, and in her eyes there was that sudden brilliancy which announces, in a coquette, the only joy that she can feel—that of having there, in her presence, an evident proof of her power. It was but for a moment, and then that changeful face was stamped with the feeling that a young girl ought to have to whom a young man offers a proof of passionate devotion—a feeling equally remote from a coolness discouraging to the worshipper and from an emotion which would be an avowal or an encouragement. Lucien, meanwhile, was beginning, after the first sentences of commonplace politeness, to explain his journey in embarrassed language which quickly convicted him of deceit:—

“I have not been quite well,” he said; “the winter, in Paris, became so severe after you left. My doctor recommended a milder climate. And I had never been in Italy. I yielded to the temptation. And I came as far as Naples. It was yesterday, in looking over the list of strangers in the reading-room of my hotel, that I saw your name, madame. And I took the liberty of going to inquire for you this morn-

ing. You are quite well, madame, and also Mademoiselle Jeanne?"

"Quite well," replied the mother. The young man's timidity, the hesitating tone of his voice, the mute entreaty of his eyes, touched her. She saw in his face that he had really suffered; and for a moment pity got the better of her scruples. She added: "You must tell us all the news from Paris. If you have not finished your visit here, we will walk on together."

"I have only just come," Lucien said. To meet once more in Madame Izelin, whose coldness had so much disconcerted him, the cordiality of the very first days of their acquaintance, was so great a surprise that it brought the colour to his face, and he began walking along with the two ladies without any more recollection of his recent impression of disappointment than if Jeanne had presented herself to his first look just as she now was. By what magic power of second sight had this young actress perceived what was expected of her and what impersonation she must adopt to complete his fascination? Certain it is that her amused smile of the earlier moments had given place to pathetic surprise, and that her eyes wandered over the ruins with a discreet melancholy. She was no longer interested in "taking" the snap-shots, which later should divert her young friends in Paris. She was in truth—with her refined blonde beauty, the pretty, graceful slenderness of her waist, of her throat, of her wrists and ankles—the lovely apparition that Lucien had dreamed of meeting: Youth, touched with a tender sadness in the midst of what represents one of the most poignant tragedies of history; Hope, amidst the relics of a destroyed civilization and itself gently saddened by the eternal menace of Fate, imprinted everywhere in this desolation. And she was careful not to ask, "what was going on in Paris," as her mother had suggested. Did there exist such a thing as society? Were there balls and all manner of gossip? The young girl seemed to have forgotten them completely. She moved on, contenting herself with the utterance of a few words, now and then, very vague, doubtless,

and very easily said, but, from these girlish lips, extraordinarily significant to her lover.

"What strikes me," she said, pointing to those abandoned shops, those vacant baths, those empty courtyards, "is, how few new things there are in life! If a rain of ashes were to bury one of our cities, there would be nothing very different found from all this. It is a great commentary on the catechism's 'vanity of vanities.'"

"Do you not think," she said, later, as they sat down on one of the steps of the theatre, "that a tragedy played here, with only a few spectators, and all this vacant city outside, would have an extremely fine effect?" And she added: "The portions of these ruins, which are most impressive to me, are those which recall scenes of festivity. Very often, at the theatre, the idea comes over me that all of us, the audience and the actors alike, are under sentence of death, and I imagine the place empty, and everybody gone. It is this dream that is realized here, and we shudder at it."

"I should like so much to know," she questioned in front of the colonnade of the little temple of Isis, "whether there were Christians in Pompeii when this catastrophe occurred? If there were, they must have been the only ones who had a hope."

And in the Street of the Tombs, before the bas-relief of Nævoleia Tyche, which represents a vessel coming into port: "I was just saying, you know, that there was nothing new! What other comparison could we invent now to express the peace of heaven after the storms of earth?"

These words occurred to her so ingenuously, she appeared so fully to comprehend and to feel all the poetry of the dead city, that Lucien listened with an admiration which kept him from observing the absolutely conventional character of all these remarks: that they were so general, so commonplace, so stupid, in fact, ought to have shown him that this facile melancholy of the tourist expressed no direct personal feeling. But this mimicry of sentiment was accompanied with such a skilful play of lips and eyelids, Jeanne had such a clever trick of placing her reflections between two silences, as if she were thinking aloud! And the lover, on his part,

yielded to a hypnotism of credulity which would have risen to the height of rapture had he not again observed how the mother's face grew sombre. Madame Izelin, in fact, from the first words of this kind that her daughter had begun to speak, herself became silent. She now saw Lucien hanging upon this voice which she knew to be so false, and Jeanne improvising and carrying on a comedy the character of which the mother so well understood; and the suffering which she had come to Italy to escape, seized upon her anew with more force than ever. This had come to a point where to continue the walk was more than she could bear. It was halfway in this Street of Tombs, and in front of the bas-relief of the vessel on whose symbolic meaning Jeanne had just now commented, her eyes full of poetry. The evidence of pose in this child who was her daughter became too intolerable to her clear-sightedness, and too intolerable the evidence of being its dupe, in this young man who himself really had, she felt, all the emotions which the other feigned to have. She said to them:—

"I am tired. I will sit here while you go on to the end of the street."

"But let us sit here with you, mamma," the girl said, with a solicitude that Madame Izelin repulsed almost harshly.

"No," she replied. "I prefer to be alone."

"Can you tell me if Madame Izelin is displeased in any way?" Lucien ventured to ask his companion as soon as they had gone a few steps. "It almost seems as if she were not willing to see me here; and still, she was so kind to me at first!"

"It is not you she is displeased with," said the young girl, "it is I."

"You?" he asked. "But why?"

"Because I have ventured to talk a little," Jeanne answered, shaking her dainty head, "and you have seemed interested in what I was saying. Do not suppose, however, that she is severe toward me. No. But she has her ideas. How can I explain this to you? My poor father was so good to her. He accustomed her to take the first place always, don't you understand? It is only natural that she

should not like giving it up, and to have any one seem to prefer me causes her pain. In short, will you pay a little more attention to her? And I beg of you, let us talk of something else."

This was said so well, in a tone half sad, half childish, that Lucien, the fastidious, did not even notice that in thus calling his attention to what she pretended was the mother's jealousy toward herself, the girl whom he hoped to make his wife was committing one of those petty moral parricides which he would have inexorably condemned in any other person. On the contrary, his feeling was one of sympathizing respect for the reserve of this child who left her complaint unfinished.

Could it be that this was truly the solution of the enigma which had barred his way so many times within these last few weeks, and that the admiration Jeanne inspired had excited in Madame Izelin that base and hateful envy of a young woman's charm and beauty, always sad to see in a woman beginning to grow old, but almost monstrous between a mother and her daughter? In a heart so imaginative and passionate as that of Jeanne's lover, an idea like this must cause revolution.

It did, indeed, produce such an effect that, for the rest of the afternoon at Pompeii and during the return to Naples, it was now Madame Izelin's turn to be amazed at the change in him. Without a word being said on the subject and quite as a matter of course, the young man had left Pompeii with the two ladies and, no less naturally, entered the same railway carriage with them. Notwithstanding Jeanne's suggestion, he could not take upon himself the task of conversing with this mother in whose nature had suddenly been revealed to him such unworthy, such guilty, ways of feeling. Jeanne, on her part,—a little ashamed after all, in her conscience, at the calumny her insatiable need of playing a part had suggested to her without her fully measuring its scope,—was silent. The mother looked at the two with an intuition that, during the few minutes when she had so imprudently left them together, words of extreme importance had been spoken. But what were they? The train went on, follow-

ing this coast of black lava, bathed with a blue sea. The sublimity of the view, which ended with the luminous point of Sorrento, the sharp rock of Capri, the softly outlined mountains of Ischia and of Posilippo, did not appease this feminine sensitiveness which perhaps was not fully conscious of itself. At the moment when the train entered the station at Naples, the fever of her anxiety had so gained upon Madame Izelin that she could not endure the idea of undergoing longer the uncertainty into which she was again plunged. The necessity of a definite explanation with Lucien imposed itself upon her. Jeanne had stepped out first, and the young man stood back to give Madame Izelin room to pass. Then the mother, with an abrupt, imperative voice, in which he could detect the extreme disturbance from which she was suffering, said to him:—

"I wish to see you. Come to my hotel in the morning at half-past ten. But by no means let her"—and she indicated Jeanne by a glance—"know of it. I rely upon your honour for this."

III

THE mental distress into which this interview, so strangely and abruptly appointed, had plunged Lucien Salvan had not abated when, at the designated hour, he was ushered into the salon of Madame Izelin's little apartment at the hotel. Why had she made him come? What decision, fatal to his happiness, was she about to announce to him?

Before the conversation of the preceding day, while Jeanne had not as yet revealed to him her mother's jealous sensitiveness, this interview would not have been at all alarming to the young man. He would have taken the opportunity thus offered him to carry out the plan which had led him to make his irrational journey. He would have shown this woman, who certainly could not remain entirely indifferent to it, the sincerity of his feeling for her daughter. He felt himself silenced, since she cherished this strange and wicked envy, of which her daughter seemed to stand so much in fear. And, again, Lucien had said to himself

that such an aberration was not in human nature, that he must have misunderstood what Jeanne had said to him, or, possibly, that she herself had been mistaken. His agitation was carried to its height by the manner in which this woman, to his mind so mysterious and upon whom depended the happiness or misery of his life, now received him.

She was seated near a window opening upon the vast picture of Vesuvius and the bay. With her whitening hair, her pallid face, the gray tonality of her dress, she gave so little the idea of a person who suffers from the homage offered to another. Everything in her face revealed a supreme self-renunciation, a mortification of self, a soul whose desires are turned, solely and irrevocably, toward peace. Her eyes, especially, when they rested upon the young man, gave a convincing denial to the accusation that Jeanne had made. Their glance was so direct, so profound, so serious! There are expressions of eyes which cannot be reconciled with meanness of heart. It was evident that this interview was no less agitating to her than to the young man; her face revealed insomnia, and her hand slightly trembled. She made a sign to Lucien to be seated, and began speaking to him. In the course of her reflection during the night, she had bitterly reproached herself for having yielded hastily to the impulse of the moment. She had said to herself that she ought not to betray to a stranger the irremediable lack of sincerity of which she could not but be conscious in her daughter; that she might bring forward objections to a marriage between Lucien and Jeanne without alluding to the latter's character at all; and she had decided upon a plan which she now began to put in execution. She proposed to appeal to the young man's generosity, feeling quite sure that to touch this string would awaken an echo in his soul.

"I desired to speak with you, Monsieur Salvan," she said, "because I have a very sincere esteem for you. There are decisions which a mother has the right to make without giving to any one her reasons for doing so. But I recognize in you a nature too noble, and too sensible also, to be willing to act toward you as I would toward another. I merely ask you to answer me first this question: Suppose that one

of your friends from Paris had met us yesterday at Pompeii, yourself, my daughter, and me—what would he have thought?"

"But, madame," the young man said confusedly, "if I had supposed that my presence displeased you, I would have left you—you and Mademoiselle Jeanne—at once. It was by your own authorization."

"I was obliged to ask you to join us," the mother said, "and I do not regret doing so. It was my wish to see you with my daughter; I did see you with her. If I had had the least doubt on certain points, it would have been dispelled. Speak to me frankly, my child." At the moment when she was about to deal the blow, she could not resist giving him, in this affectionate appellation, a proof of her pity for the suffering she must inflict. "Yes," she insisted, "answer me. Do you believe that this friend from Paris, of whom I spoke, would have believed that we had met there by accident?"

"No, madame," he said simply.

"Be frank to the end," Madame Izelin continued, "and confess that your whole journey had but one thing in view: that you came to Naples because you desired to see Jeanne."

"I confess it," Lucien replied. He felt, while Madame Izelin spoke, that kind of dismayed confusion which overcomes young men like him, modest in their feelings to the extent of shyness, when one of their most inner secrets is put into words in their presence. They were aware that this secret was known to the person talking with them, and still, the clear statement of it discomposes them as much as if they had felt themselves secure of absolute mystery. It will happen, then, that instead of trying to conceal a part, at least, of what they had resolved to keep secret, they feel a need of complete frankness, and, in their turn, speak words of which they would have believed themselves forever incapable. Jeanne's lover repeated, "I confess it;" and then went on, astonished, himself, at what he was daring to say: "I understand now that I did wrong, and that you might very easily have misjudged me. It will appear to you irrational, but it is perfectly true, I never for a moment thought of the possibility of being recognized by some person of our

acquaintance—of my presence here being known, interpreted, commented upon. Since you understand me so well, you have also become aware what my feeling is toward Mademoiselle Jeanne. But I know too well that you have perceived it. I know that you left Paris on that account, because you thought me too devoted to her. Then I was most unhappy. I said to myself that some one had spoken ill of me to you. I believed this. I believed, also, that you had a plan for another marriage for Mademoiselle Jeanne. A name had been mentioned in my hearing. I could not bear this uncertainty, and so I left home. It was my intention to remain in the south of France, to endeavour to ascertain the date of your return, and to meet you somewhere in the north of Italy. Then I thought that I might come to meet you as far as Florence; then I thought I might come to Rome. At last the temptation was too strong; and I am here. I have told the whole story, madame. If you order me to leave Naples, I shall obey you. But I beg you to believe me, there was no subterfuge on my part, and never for an instant did I dream that my journey could compromise Mademoiselle Izelin."

"She was not informed of your leaving home?" the mother asked.

"Ah! madame!" he replied, so excessively shocked he could scarcely conceal it.

"How he loves her!" thought Madame Izelin, at this new proof of the infinite delicacy of this heart of a young man; and she replied: "I believe you, Monsieur Salvan; and I am very grateful to you for having spoken with this entire sincerity. I will respond to it with an equal sincerity. It is very true," she added, after a moment's hesitation, "that I took my daughter away from Paris because of you. But do not reproach yourself. You have overstepped in no way in your attentions the limits that an honourable man should fix for himself where a young girl is concerned. Nor has any person spoken ill of you to me. I should not have allowed it, having too carefully observed you not to have formed a definite judgment in regard to you. I have already told you that I esteem you highly—ah, yes! infinitely."

She said these last words with an emotion that she could hardly conceal; and this completed Lucien Salvan's mental confusion. This esteem in which she held him was too violently in contrast with the resolution that she had had, that she still had, to separate him from her daughter; and he could not but protest against this contradiction, all the more painful to him, the more unintelligible it was.

"But, then, madame," he exclaimed, "why have you treated me, why do you still treat me, like a person whom you do not esteem? I know that I have nothing which could very much gratify a mother's pride, that my family are of *bourgeois* station, and that I myself am destined to a career simply honourable. But is there here a reason that justifies this determined refusal which I feared in your departure from Paris, which I now read in your eyes, in your tone, in your whole attitude? You have made other engagements? I think it must be so," he continued, shaking his head, "and you will not tell me. You have the right—and still," he added, in an agonized voice, "if it is the young man whose name has been mentioned to me, I swear to you, madame, that Mademoiselle Jeanne would be happier with me!"

This cry of ingenuous jealousy had no sooner escaped him than he felt its imprudence. But how recall the spoken word?

"A person has been mentioned to you?" she asked. "Tell me what it is. Yes, tell me. I have a right to know what is said about my daughter."

"Monsieur de Barrois," repeated the mother. "I thank you for letting me know. It is natural enough," she continued, with an irony which revealed the increasing fatigue of her nerves, "that this man of rank who comes among *bourgeois* like ourselves to obtain a dowry should circulate this report. I shall put a stop to it. It is not less natural," she added, "that jealousy should make you credit a bit of gossip so absurd. For, after all, what has Monsieur de Barrois in his favour? The man is a libertine and an idler. He has a title, it is true. Did you think," she insisted, "that I was capable of deciding for this reason, for the sake of having a daughter, *marquise*? Yes," she affirmed, seeing, at

this simple remark, the colour again come into the young man's face, "you did think it." And her voice grew singularly bitter. "Ah! that would indeed be too great a deception to have certain feelings if we did not have them for one's self. Besides, we do not deceive ourselves. When I saw that you were interested in Jeanne, Monsieur Salvan," she resumed, "did I try to find base motives for your conduct? Why did you seek them for mine, when you saw that I took my daughter away, and understood that I was opposed to your marrying her? Why did you not give me credit? Why did you not think in this way: 'Madame Izelin knows her daughter better than I do, she feels that our characters are not suited to each other, and she wishes to save us both from disappointments, that is all'? Even you might have been able to divine," and it was her turn now to colour slightly, "that this resolution was painful, is painful, to me. I have not concealed from you how sympathetic you were to me; I do not conceal it now. You have in your nature every refinement, every loyalty, I am perfectly conscious, that a woman who has had the experience of life could desire in a son-in-law. If I am opposed to this marriage, it is for no egoistic reason. Try, then, to understand this, and do not oblige me to say more."

"I think I understand you, madame," Lucien replied, after a silence. While the mother was speaking, and as it will happen in certain moments of decisive explanation, all the contradictory impressions through which he had passed since he had been occupied with Jeanne, at once reawakened in him. He remembered both the hopes that he formed from her cordial welcome, and his uncertainties at other times, his disappointment the preceding day, for instance, when he perceived her enter Pompeii, so evidently indifferent and frivolous; then, their sudden sympathy of feeling during the visit to the dead city, the mother's increasing disapproval at the intimacy of their conversation, and the explanation of it which Jeanne had given him. The enigma of his situation toward these two women became more and more obscure, unless the key to it was simply that the mother and daughter misunderstood one another. "Yes," he continued,

"you are sure that Mademoiselle Jeanne does not love me. If this is so," and a tone of entreaty passed into his voice, "and if, as to me, you have that esteem for which I am deeply grateful, do you think it right to forbid me to try to make myself loved by her? There exists between Mademoiselle Izelin and myself, permit me to say to you, so much mental resemblance, we have so naturally the same way of feeling, that this sympathy might perhaps become on her part something closer. If you will allow me merely to live somewhat in her atmosphere, not now, not during this journey, I am too well aware that social proprieties forbid it, but in Paris, in the society where we should naturally meet, that would be a test. Do I need to assure you that, if you permit me this, I will act with all prudence and discretion; and if, in six months, in a year, I have not been able to make myself loved by her then—yes, I shall feel it only too just that you should send me away. But from now till then——"

"From now till then," she interrupted with her serious voice, "I shall have allowed you to waste your life, to fill your noble, generous heart still more full of a sentiment which I am sure, understand me, absolutely sure, will never be shared."

"Why not?" he asked.

"Why not? Because that identity which you believe exists between your ways of feeling and hers exists only in your imagination; because you are a soul of one race and she is a soul of another; because it is still not too late for you to tear yourself away from that which will never be anything but a mirage. I have been like you," she insisted, with the tone of one who is calling up memories from the very depths of her heart and her past; "like you, I stood on the edge of life; like you, I was fascinated by what I believed to be an accord of souls, a something true. And it was all false. Ah! if any one had spoken to me then as I now speak to you!"

She stopped, terrified at having made an allusion so direct to her own marriage. Although the language of this half-confession was singularly obscure to the young man who

listened to it, there was too much sincere grief expressed there for him not to be touched by it, and at the same time he formed a too evident conclusion: Madame Izelin was opposing his marriage to her daughter because she had, in regard to this daughter's character and heart, a mistrust—of what nature? a suspicion—a suspicion of what? This evidence was suddenly so hard for the lover to endure that he replied:

"But are you sure, madame, that you are not mistaken? It is very daring in me to touch on such a subject, but in saying to me what you have just now said, you give me the proof of so much confidence! And, besides, I cannot leave you, now, without being entirely frank myself. I do not know what will be the result of this conversation for myself. I should be, not consoled but yet less unhappy, if it resulted in clearing up, in some degree, a situation which I can see must be most painful both both for you and for another person. You must pardon me," he added, hesitating as he spoke, "if I venture thus to interpret your words. It seems to me that they give the idea that the chances of unhappiness, if you consented to grant me your daughter's hand, would not come from my side. Pardon me if I go still farther. But, yesterday, in our walk in Pompeii, it seemed to me that she felt, also, on your part, a severity,—almost an ill-will,—and that she suffered from it. I have not lived very long, and still I know that between natures of great delicacy, and seemingly most fitted for mutual esteem, there may be a settled misunderstanding. I was only too conscious yesterday that Mademoiselle Izelin—she also, on her part—was disturbed at not being fully in harmony with you, and that she was made unhappy by it."

"Ah!" the mother said. "She spoke of me to you? I might have known it. And at what time in the day? While you were finishing your walk in the Street of Tombs, and I waited for you? I suspected it."

"Madame," exclaimed the young man, "do not, I implore you, take in this way what I have been so unsuccessfully

trying to say to you. I had seemed to divine in your face a certain displeasure——”

“And then,” Madame Izelin interrupted, “you questioned her? You asked what was the matter? And what did she tell you? But I, too, divined it, what it was that she told you, merely by looking at you afterward, merely by seeing you now! She complained of me,” the mother continued, as if speaking to herself. “It would be so, of course; and you believed her—that would be so, too.”

She had risen, while saying these words, to which Salvan dared not reply. It is with certain conversations as with those walks over undermined ground, where suddenly the foot awakens an echo so prolonged that one stops short. It was a like surprise at the echo of his words that now seized Lucien. He became conscious of secret, unexplored depths, of all the interior ravage of prolonged meditations and solitary griefs, in this woman who now alarmed him by the inexplicable emotion with which he saw her overcome. She had ceased looking at him, and had gone, as if to tranquilize herself, to lean upon the window-sill. He saw the gray masses of her hair, her head resting upon her white, contracted hand, her other nervously grasping the edge of the window. What meant this sudden outburst of indignation against—what? Against a complaint whose nature she could not even suspect? What inconceivable, strained relations existed between this mother and this daughter, that they should appear to suffer from each other to this degree? But Lucien had not been dreaming yesterday; Jeanne had really said to him those words: “I have ventured to talk a little, and you have seemed to be interested in what I was saying. That is why she is displeased.” And—to make still clearer the meaning that was clear enough already, of what she had said—she had added the remark about her father, explaining, if not excusing, the widow’s sensitiveness toward her daughter, younger, and in the full charm of her beauty. Nor had he been dreaming just now, in hearing Madame Izelin refer to her own marriage, and utter that cry, wherein was expressed all the sadness of her ruined life, that “It was all false!” that “If

any one had spoken to me then as I now speak to you!" She, then, had been unhappy in her marriage? That Jeanne should not know this was only natural. But it was not natural that the mother should hold enmity toward her daughter because of the miseries of her own married life. Nor was it natural that, at the faintest suggestion, she should suspect the girl of being unjust toward her. The young man was afraid of what she might be going to say to him when she should emerge from this silence, more strange than her words. His heart beat hard, as at the approach of some catastrophe, when she suddenly turned, her face contracted, her eyes almost stern.

"Jeanne is coming in," she said abruptly. "She is just getting out of the carriage at the door of the hotel. In two minutes she will be here. Place yourself there," and she indicated to Lucien the door which from the little salon led into her own room, "behind this portière," and she pulled together the heavy material, after partly opening one leaf of the door. "You must do it," she continued; "you must know the truth. Then you can decide for yourself." She repeated, "You must do it," and there was such imperative command in her look that the young man obeyed, without demur, a plan whose eccentric character only became clear to him when, hidden behind the heavy folds of damask, he began to hear the two voices, that of the mother and that of the daughter, exchanging very simple, unmeaning remarks, as it would have seemed to any other person than himself.

But the words which Jeanne was saying, believing herself alone with her mother, so belied her words of the preceding day, her way of taking a certain allusion that Madame Izelin made contrasted so strongly with the kind of restrained feeling that she had shown to Lucien in the visit to Pompeii—the entire conversation was so evident a proof of the artificialness of this nature, in which all was expression and nothing was true with genuine truth, that the man who loved her could have cried out with anguish. This evidence was made more painful and more convincing by this peculiarity of it—that he heard the timbre of the young

girl's voice without seeing her face. For the first time, being no longer under the prestige of her delicious beauty, all in her that was so self-willed and so factitious was, as it were, made perceptible to him by her tone of voice. She had a certain too gentle and slightly emphatic way of uttering her sentences, which had been extremely fascinating to him when smiles and glances accompanied this intonation. He suddenly felt that this beautiful voice spoke *false*, and it hurt him once more in that place far within, where one perceives the infinitely small things of life, those nothings that escape analysis and almost consciousness. But what a rôle they play in the history of one's heart! They are the only revelations that we have of the *personality* in those whom we love or whom we hate—that personality which may possibly be unlike what they do at any given time, but can hardly fail to be like their voice, if only we know how to listen to it!

"Well," the mother had said, "did you find what you wanted?"

"Yes, mamma," Jeanne had replied. "I decided on the dog-collar with nine strands, with the little gold bars. I can enhance these in Paris for bars with pearls. You should see how pale the coral is, almost white, so becoming to me! So good of you, mamma, to give me this! You are always so good to me!"

"You are happy with me, then?" the mother asked.

"Perfectly happy," the young girl replied. "Why should I not be? You are so indulgent to me, always."

"Perhaps I shall not have a very long time to pet you," Madame Irélin resumed. "I am so worn out. You know life has not always been easy for me."

"I know it, mamma," said Jeanne. "You have not been ill, this morning?"

"No," the mother replied. "But when I think of you and that you will soon be married, I say to myself that you may perhaps have great trials in your life as a woman, and I would like to be sure that at least you have had none in your life as a girl."

"What trials could I have had, mamma?" Jeanne asked.

"One never knows," the mother answered. "If there were anything in my way of treating you that has given you pain,—even the least,—you must tell me."

"What an idea!" the young girl said coaxingly. She took her mother's hand and kissed it. The soft sound of her lips in a long caress was just audible to Lucien, whose heart almost stopped beating as he heard this question put by the girl in a tone half playful, half emotional: "I think you must have some reason for speaking to me like this? I think I know what it is! There is some new plan in the air as to my marriage."

"You are quite right," Madame Izelin replied.

"And may one ask the candidate's name?" said the girl, still playfully.

"It has come to my knowledge," replied Madame Izelin, "that Monsieur de Barrois has sounded some of our friends to know whether he could take a step in this direction on our return. I have not yet replied. You know I have told you, once for all, that when you are asked in marriage by any one, I shall tell you all the objections that I think are well founded; and then I shall leave you to decide freely. What do you think of Monsieur de Barrois?"

"I think," said the young girl, "that I have never dreamed of him as a husband, but that I find him very agreeable."

"You have no positive objection, then?" the mother asked.

"Not any at all," said Jeanne.

"There is no other person, then, whom you love?" insisted Madame Izelin.

"There is one person whom I love—it is you!" said the girl. And her companion of the preceding day, with a yet more painful amazement, heard her play her rôle of the petted and grateful child. That one, among all the attitudes of this truthless soul, was the one from which the mother naturally suffered most. She slipped away from it usually, but this time she allowed her daughter to show herself off, to make all the display she wished. "Yes," the girl repeated, "there is a person whom I love; it is you! And I shall love Monsieur de Barrois, if you think best. Marquise de Barrois—that sounds well, certainly; but first

we must be sure that Monsieur le marquis would make a good son-in-law! Julie will be jealous, mamma; *she cannot endure to have anybody seem to prefer me!*" The same words that she had used the preceding day to define her mother's feelings toward herself recurred to her. On one point, the conviction that she was surrounded by universal envy, this girl, so instinctively artificial, was sincere. "But," she asked, "are you not going to tell me who wrote you about Monsieur de Barrois?"

"That is my secret," the mother said; "only I wanted to question you before I replied."

"Well," Jeanne said, "you know all. I am going to write to Julie," she added; "may I mention it to her?"

"By no means," replied the mother.

"I understand," said Jeanne. "Besides, I have enough to write about. I have already *done* Pompeii in my journal. I only have to copy the pages for her, making some little changes. I shall hear no more, I hope, about her tiresome *Feria* at Seville last year! Oh, say, mamma, if I am to be married soon, they could put diamonds on the bars of the coral necklace. That would be so much better."

This last remark was followed by a silence, and then the sound of a door shutting, which made Lucien know that Jeanne had left the salon; and almost immediately Madame Izelin came to raise the portière behind which he had been concealed. The mother's eyes were even more troubled than usual. He could have discerned in them, if he had had the strength to reflect, a pity for himself and a regret for what she had just ventured to do; for, whatever were the faults, or even the vices, of her daughter's character, she was her daughter, and the other, the man whom she had resolved thus to cure of his illusion, was a stranger. But the lover, at this moment, saw, felt, but one thing—the girl whom he loved did not love him. All the earlier part of the conversation had been very painful to him, proving as it did that Jeanne had simply tricked him the day before in representing herself as a victim of her mother's envy. It had been very painful to him that their visit to Pompeii, which he had wished to keep forever sacred in his

thoughts for her sake, had been to her only an epistolary theme, to be used to astonish a cousin. But how easily he would have pardoned these failures of feeling if she had answered differently when her mother questioned her as to the Marquis de Barrois! It was this proof, unanswerable, definitive, of her indifference toward himself, that he could not endure! He said very softly to Madame Izelin: "You were right, madame. There is nothing more for me to do in Naples. I shall leave to-night." He bowed to her silently, and, before she could find a word to say, he was gone.

She remained for some minutes motionless; then, abruptly, without stopping to put on her bonnet, she rushed to the door and down the stairs, hoping to overtake him before he left the house. She felt a need of speaking to him again, of explaining to him more fully her motives in what she had done. All her scruples of the past months, ending in this strange and cruel scene, vanished from her thought in presence of the distress that she had read upon the young man's face. She reached the hall, at the foot of the stairs, only as he was just going out of the hotel door. Twice she called him, but he did not hear; or, perhaps, he was unwilling to return. Then, when the *portier* came to ask if she would like to have the boy run after *ce monsieur français*, and ask him to come back, Madame Izelin suddenly woke up to realities. She said, "No, it is not worth while;" and went upstairs to shut herself into her own room and weep. She had perhaps saved Lucien Salvan from a marriage which would have rendered him unhappy, but she had lost in him the person who, of all others, would have been dearest to her as a son.

Thus she had been sitting, crying, in her own room, for fifteen minutes, when she heard her daughter call to her from the salon. Collecting all her strength she called back, louder than was necessary, that the loud tone of her voice might conceal its emotion, "I am coming directly," and bathed her eyes that the girl might not see the traces of tears. For years the tricks of word and manner that Jeanne employed to commiserate her mother's sadness or indispo-

sitions had been particularly painful to the latter. At the present moment such factitiousness was physically unendurable. But this trial was spared her. Jeanne was too much occupied with herself to observe her mother's face. She had brought in her letter, and was so pleased with it herself that she wished Madame Izelin to read it, and held it out to her, saying:

"Here is my letter to Julie. See what you think of it."

The mother took the sheet of paper covered with its large, stylish handwriting, in which a graphologist would have discovered an arid and capricious nature by the letters without down- or up-strokes, all equally heavy, and by the *t*'s crossed at the top. It consisted of a series of sentences upon Pompeii, very adroitly borrowed from the conversation of the preceding day with Lucien. She recognised the young man's own words, her words, a word from the guide-book even—the whole giving the idea of a nature so fine, so accessible to art! Salvan's name, of course, was not mentioned. Before this little masterpiece of artifice, the mother's melancholy redoubled. She said to herself, "I did well;" and to her daughter she said: "Your letter is admirable. It is very prettily written."

"I thought you would not dislike it," said the girl, who could not grasp the secret sarcasm of the mother's phrase; "I wrote it with feeling. That is the only kind of letter that I like. That is what I love so much in Italy. Everything appeals to one's heart here."

"If he had read this letter, and if he had seen her like this," the mother thought, remembering the scene of the past hour, "he would believe her!" And again she said to herself, "I did well."

FLORENCE, May, 1901.

A MARRIED COUPLE

(*Un Couple*)

By MARCEL PRÉVOST

ALL the Parisians who frequented Nice and Monte Carlo last season remembered having seen at the Circle, at the English promenade, at the theatre or at the races, the curious couple, whom Paul B—— had christened “lovers from beyond the grave.” Indeed they made one think of spirits from a supernatural land of love. She, still young and very beautiful, gave this impression because of her emaciated form, the pallor of her face, and the æsthetic indifference of her splendid blue eyes; he, because of something youthful, and hopelessly worn out that was betrayed in his nervous and depressed walk, and the carriage of his head, at once enfeebled and proud. Although he was getting gray he would have been handsome if not for the large black band which covered his right eye, and the upper part of his right cheek, not quite concealing the burns which seared the whole side of his face. Hand in hand these two beings would sit, and listen to the music, and breathe in the perfumes, and gaze at the far horizon, in the delightful fairyland, never mingling with the bustling noisy crowds which surrounded them. They were never seen with friends, and they did not seem to desire any, happy doubtless in the miniature universe which each was for the other. At nightfall, they would disappear; few people knew their retreat. They lived in a handsome villa, on the shore of the gulf, in Villi-franchi-Mer, right near the unpretentious house where I was staying. They were known as M. and Mme. Le Thierrey.

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I came to know them merely by chancing to be their neighbour. The young woman, whose lungs were weak, used to leave the terrace where they dined early tête-à-tête. Many a time her husband and I would remain together smoking cigarettes, and lost in one of those silent reveries, or one of those leisurely conversations which the serene vastness of the views there inspires. And one evening it came about that he told me their story—without my soliciting his confidence—on an evening when the air, milder than usual, heavy with the scent of African flowers, or the greater calm of the sea—like molten copper beneath the broad rays of the moon, awoke in us both the desire to speak low, and to tell or hear tales of love.

"You have surely guessed," Le Thierrey said to me, "that there is a drama in Lucy's past and in mine; a commonplace tragedy, if one considers only the action itself, but rare and unusual perhaps because of its causes and its consequences.

"I am thirty-two years old; my wife is twenty-six; she was seventeen when I met her. She had come to live in Paris with her mother and her older sister. They lived on the fifth floor of the house and we were on the first. The life of these three women was, as happens in many provincial bourgeois households, abruptly broken up by a spoiled child's caprice. Lucy developed an irresistible bent for the stage, and since she did as she pleased with her mother and her sister Clémence, being so pretty and bright, so egotistic and so wilful, she made them decide to live in Paris where, they thought, she would burst forth as an artist and a celebrity by the mere effect of the artistic atmosphere of the city.

"At this time I left the École des Chartes. My life till then had been divided between study and the affection of my family. I was a kind of precocious savant, timid and with an untouched heart. I fell in love with Lucy at first sight. From that day, whatever other women could offer me meant nothing to me; and actually even now, I am so indifferent to feminine beauty that I do not know it when I see it.

"The girl realized the state of my feelings, and promptly began to make me suffer. In our furtive meetings on the

stairs—meetings which I managed at the cost of great inconvenience, watching for her return from the Conservatory; in those meetings when I passed close to her, my heart failing me, scarcely finding strength to greet her, she pretended to pass without seeing me, or rather, what was still more cruel, she contrived to be taken home by her classmates, with their smooth, sallow, bluish cheeks; taking their arms with every appearance of tenderness the moment she saw me. Apart from this, she remained impregnable, stubbornly indifferent to love, as unkind to others as to me.

"Luckily my passion had two advocates in Lucy's mother and sister. These two, whose one aim in life was the glory and happiness of their idol, immediately dreamed of a marriage which would make her rich, and give her as a husband a man of good family who adored her. You can imagine what struggles I had with my family, on account of this marriage. As for the girl, she would never have consented, had not repeated failures, first in the Conservatory, and then in several small trial scenes in which she made her début, disgusted her with the stage, and inspired her with the desire to wipe out all these humiliations by means of a brilliant marriage, which would humiliate her companions in their turn.

"I quarrelled with my family. I married Lucy. Her mother and elder sister lived with us.

"Till then, I had only to suffer the usual agonies of those who pursue a woman, who is beloved and cruel, over a thousand obstacles. But it was after possessing her that I became truly wretched. Lucy did not refuse herself to me; she managed something worse than that. As she gave herself to me, she declared haughtily that my caresses were odious to her, that she endured them because she felt herself obliged to, having sold herself to me for my fortune and my name. When she spoke like this, I was forced to admit to myself that she was not lying. In the eyes of my wife I stood for her lost career, her vanished artistic glory. I was the living permanent proof of the crumbling of her dreams.

"The burden of deception which she loaded upon all who

surrounded her, bore most heavily on me, whom she could hurt most because I was the one who loved her most. Oh! the baseness of desire! I endured all, her coldness, her disdain, her insults, so long as she gave me her beloved body, whose possession became more dear, the more degradation it cost me. I had convinced myself that my life was united to an exceptional soul, with a sort of pathological perversity, possessed by egoism and malice, and the desire to give pain; and this soul I still adored and still fondly hoped to win over into adoration of me.

"I will not retrace with you the stages of my Calvary. All that pride and tenderness of a husband could suffer, I suffered. I am a man, sir, to whom his wife said one day, 'I am going to betray you, not because I love another, but because I hate you and want to dishonour you.' And she did so. She betrayed me with an individual worthy of the utmost contempt. And I did not part from her; I went on adoring her."

Le Thierrey stopped speaking. It was quite dark by now. In the profound silence we heard nothing but the slashing of the wavelets, and the hushed notes of a piano from the closed windows of the villa. For a moment my companion listened to the music. He murmured with an expression of ineffable tenderness:

"The Pastoral Symphony! It is she who is playing!"

After a few more moments of silence he went on:

"My mother-in-law died the year following my marriage, but my sister-in-law, Clémence, kept on living with us. She was my one consolation. No one could better understand and sympathize with my misery than this poor girl whose whole life had been a voluntary sacrifice to the woman I had chosen for my companion. We did not need to confide in each other to know each other's sad secret. The day Lucy broke the last barrier, and left me to go to live with a lover, only Clémence was able to keep me from killing myself.

"I lived. . . . We remained, the elder sister and I, guardians of the empty hearth, like two old people whose only child was dead. The world at once declared that we were

lovers. It was false, it was mad—need I say so? Our aching souls were utterly closed to love. But the world does not understand how a young man and a young woman can associate in order to weep together. The talk of gossipings was brought to us; we were counselled to put an end to our unequivocal situation. We paid no attention and continued living as before. Together, at least, we could talk of Lucy. And then, what did these idle remarks matter to us? Were we not two beings retired from the world?

"Here comes the drama of which I spoke to you. This drama, I told you, is commonplace in itself; so I will tell it to you in a few words. Lucy heard that I was her sister's lover. Why did this woman, who did not love me and who was betraying me, at once conceive a jealousy so sharp as to suggest a crime to her? I suppose that she was exasperated by the thought that the two beings whom she had tortured could afford each other the supreme consolation. It was the period when several sensational trials had made vitriol fashionable. One evening as Clémence and I were returning home arm in arm from a melancholy walk, a woman hidden behind the corner of the house suddenly unmasked herself and hurled at us the contents of a vial full of vitriol. Clémence was burned on the face and breast. She died next day in horrible convulsions. I was only sprinkled on the right temple, but I lost my eye and remained scarred for life.

"Have you heard, monsieur, of those cases of madness or idiocy cured by a fall, by a violent shock to the head?

"There took place in the soul of Lucy a miracle comparable to these in suddenness and completeness. This soul, like that of Lorenzaccio de Musset, was pregnant with a crime, but one crime only. Once it was committed she suddenly became once more an ordinary human soul, pitiful and suffering. It was as sudden and final as an exorcism. Seeing us fall she threw herself on our bodies, weeping and denouncing herself, calling for help in a terrible fit of despair. In prison she had to be constantly watched in order to prevent her from killing herself. And when, by accusing myself and the innocent memory of her sister (who, I am sure, pardoned her for it), I succeeded in securing her acquittal, it was she

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who tended me with incomparable devotion, and who saved my life at the risk of her health.

"These events are several years old; but since then, the reconquered tenderness of my wife has never diminished. At the same moment that her heart opened to pity and to love, her body revived to caresses. What more shall I tell you, monsieur? I have deliberately forgotten the past; I love and am loved; these words contain all. I am disfigured and infirm for life; most of my family has broken away from me; those of my former friends who did not openly abandon me, pitied me or despised me; doctors tell me that my life will be short, and I sometimes feel in my wound a recurrence of terrible pain. But Lucy is mine; at last she belongs to me, body and heart; I regret nothing; I have not paid too dearly for my happiness."

My companion ceased to speak. Noises had stopped, and the fires were out in the villa; the piano was silent. Only the mysterious voice of the sea broke the stillness. And without a word, lost in reflection, he continued to gaze upon that still, trembling ocean so often compared to the soul of woman.

LOVE IN THULE

(Un Amour de Thulé)

By MAURICE BARRÈS

IN Seville, the city of her birth, Violante scandalised everybody by her beauty and her indiscretions. For at twenty she had the romantic habit of becoming a sister to the handsomest, most spirited and noble youths of her circle. She believed, quite mistakenly, of course, that if one's sentiments were lofty and one's conduct irreproachable one could afford to ignore all malicious gossipings. After being insulted several times she left Spain, first marrying a young Frenchman, who paid for the marriage with his health and his career.

They travelled for three years, then settled down in Paris, and at the end of her twenty-fifth year she was left a widow.

Her husband's family had not accepted her with very good grace, for despite their distinguished name they were people of a bourgeois cast of mind, who looked upon every foreign woman as somewhat of an adventuress; and this young woman was not the sort of person to make them believe the contrary. And so, when she was left alone, they did nothing to aid her in keeping up her position in society, where her largeness of soul, a thousand reports from Spain concerning her, and her rare charm soon placed her in a compromising position. It happened, moreover, that she accepted the devotion of a young man, as one is happy to do at that age.

No one knew anything very definite about their relations.

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but as usual, people took the opportunity of thinking the worst. They were right. The important thing is that the pair treated one another during this liaison, which lasted for eight years, with infinite tact and delicacy. Nor did they purposely hurt one another, but on the contrary they ennobled one another by proving in their relations, that not everything is base and vulgar in this world. Thus they lived, he with nothing to occupy him, devoted and grateful; she, haughty and capricious towards the indifferent, all tenderness and devotion towards him. Marriage did not tempt them for a moment; it would have meant to introduce the element of obligation into the habits which they adopted without over much formality.

They met each other in society, at the theatre, and at the races, and almost every day they spent long hours together in their apartment in the Avenue Montaigne. The young woman slipped by insensible degreess from the best circles into male society alone, and seemed to be content with it. As for him, he never wearied of hearing her recount the adventures which had befallen her in Seville and in the course of her travels.

She told him of the wild asses in Africa, of the magnificent fruits in Andalusia, of the climate in the Balearic Isles: she found Italy a trifle insipid after her rugged Spain, she detested England, and cared nothing for Central Europe with the exception of the summer evenings in the Carlsbad restaurants, where the gypsies, known there as "Lothars," used to sing. He was in accord with her in respect to all these matters, and enjoyed immensely the picturesqueness and vividness of the sensations and impressions which she communicated to him with the manner of a blasé child.

She took special delight in a romantic conception of life, which she had long ago evolved and which she loved so much that she absolutely refused to allow herself to be disillusioned of this young girl's dream; it would have been a splendid sort of existence, she said, to form a perfect friendship, as between brother and sister, with young men of very refined sensibilities and to live in an atmosphere of pleasure, beauty and mutual trust, like children overflowing with life, who

kiss each other and share their toys. And he, amidst these daring fancies of hers, which had, after all, somewhat lowered his moral tone, experienced a peculiar pleasure, very subtle and very profound, in pitying this being made up of optimism, sweetness and sensuality. His mind, moreover, grew keener in following her, for she judged things without regard to morality, but only according to the dictates of her sense of beauty and her passion for refinement.

However, he did not see complete happiness in the face of this beloved friend. Did she perhaps desire more violent emotion, did she believe herself not perfectly loved? He would question her sometimes.

"No," she would answer, "I am not suffering, but it seems to me that there is no joy that I have not already experienced."

He clasped her in his arms without a word, for he felt she was right. Splendid horses, the most humble of admirers, everything that the most meticulous snobbism might exact—all these she had, and now there was nothing more for her to take pleasure in, not even at her dressmakers. In a word, she was suffering from having exhausted all sensations.

One idea to which she frequently kept reverting, was that of visiting the countries of the far East, and he understood very well that she had built up an image of them from Japanese vases, brocaded silks and certain amusing figures at the Chinese legation, a purely legendary conception utterly devoid of everyday reality. It was the one experience which this fanciful person had not made trial of. She believed in China, not having had the occasion to see that there too existed that element of imperfection which detracts from everything that inheres in all reality. She often said:

"When I grow old, my beloved, and feel myself utterly incapable of enjoying the things which I possess, I shall go down there, send you gifts, and die."

As she had in her as much romantic feeling as a person can well possess without actually descending to the ridiculous, this pleased her—to end her life mysteriously, and to drown herself in the crowd, just as a little sick animal drowns

itself in the Seine. Ah! to die, on a blazing day, practically abandoned, in a hotel in Shanghai, and by her end compel the mercy of God!

At last, the feeling of blankness from which they suffered became so great that she judged that the moment had come when they ought to separate, and though he felt that neither could any longer contribute to the happiness of the other, nevertheless his suffering was great, for it brought home to him definitely that their happiness was at an end. She told him of her painful intention, and then avoided discussion of it. This was partly out of consideration, and partly in order that his pleadings might not weaken her resolution. By a tacit agreement, they made a pretense of treating her undertaking merely as a trip to the countries of the East. Only the last time that they saw each other, in the apartment where they had lived through so much, they were terribly agitated. In the ante-room, dim in the closing day, near the door which for years had been for them a door to a universe apart, and which was now to be, they thought, only the entrance to a tomb, they united in a long embrace; not at all as a lover and his mistress, but of two beings of the same race who were met upon earth and who had never been hypocritical with each other.

"Promise me," she said to him, "that you will come here again sometimes. Always preserve our home, and let every trifle remain as we are leaving it today. If any woman chances to please you, do not have the least scruple about bringing her here, provided that she be a true friend, for my one wish is that you should be happy. But one evening, Christmas eve, I ask you to remain alone in this apartment."

She thought that on Christmas great mysteries took place in nature; that on that night, things acquired souls, and became alive.

"Promise me," she repeated, "that you will come and think of our former joy amidst all the things that used to surround us."

She spoke with so much tenderness, in a tone so purified of all the pangs of jealousy, that both of them felt the bitter pleasure of the devotee although they did not know to what

or to whom they devoted themselves, and their eyes filled with tears. Ah! how wretched they felt at their impotence to give joy to one another, and perchance ashamed to find happiness only in their grief!

He did as she wished, and in that apartment, given over to silence, he came at irregular intervals to spend an hour calling up the images of the past? Although she had promised to write to him, and to give him her successive addresses, he received no word from the traveller. For the rest, if he suffered, it was a delicious melancholy, a sort of "pleasure in self torture," in thinking that he had let his fair treasure, his beloved, be drawn into the whirlpool.

Now, when eight months had passed, and Christmas was approaching, a chest filled with precious objects from China, was delivered one day in the Rue Montaigne. He put off opening it. Then on the night, when, in order to celebrate the birth of the Infant Jesus, the faithful embrace in the churches, and the *viveurs* in the cabarets, he shut himself up in their favourite room.

The lamps, set in their wonted places, shed upon the same decorations those lights and shadows, amongst which he and Violante had passed so many evenings. Dressing-room and music-room, upon both of them was the spell of the sweetness of their intimacy and the memory of impassioned music. It was in this spacious room that he had been intoxicated with tenderness and beauty, and for him it was filled with a luminous and ardent atmosphere, like the voice of Van Dyck in the love-song of Siegmund. It was there, at the knees of his mistress, that little by little he had discovered beneath the mask of the woman of the world, the real woman, not at all a being made up of social graces and pretty ways, but instinct with humanity, and still very close to the little girl who used to play with dolls. That piano, those large mirrors, that dressing-room, those vast wardrobes so gay with ribboned lingerie, were not merely inanimate objects, but friends, well-beloved companions; those smelling-salts, which she played with while talking together, which she so often pressed to her appealing face, that blue vase in which she delighted to arrange the yellow tulips flecked with red

and green, which went by the droll name of "parrot tulips," all the dainty fripperies, with which she had amused herself, all those toys for grown-ups—everything had taken on a certain spiritual quality, something which might almost have been called a soul, by the fact that it had known the caress of her touch, her glance, and her voice so tender with love. In her hands and beneath the breath of her young mouth, the flowers lived as though they actually were gentle living creatures; they were no more than vegetables now that the beloved one who animated them with her loving kindness was no longer there.

Little by little the objects began to speak with him. . . . First the great three-panelled mirror before which she had instinctively fallen into graceful poses, shadowed forth her beauty. "It is here," he said to himself, "when I admired the variety, the versatility, the thousand aspects of her charm, that beauty came to seem a living thing to me, the sum of a human being's usefulness. Violante gave me a distaste for museums and libraries, where things are motionless and barren. It is through her that I learnt the rather humid sensuality of beauty, and for me she replaced also the forests and the ocean and the splendour of night in the wilderness. For I possessed their fragrance, their infinity, and their melancholy, according as her hair was loosened in little-girl fashion, and her eyes drowned in bliss beneath my lips.

"Here are the dressing tables and the familiar objects which she would not let me touch, hastening to serve me herself, because it amused her, she said, but, I knew well, influenced by a deeper motive, by the voluptuous joy of self-humiliation—she, who was so charming, that she might love the better.

"It was at this window through which the light streamed so brightly, that I sometimes turned my eyes away from her face, on days when her features looked drawn, and her expression fatigued, not at all because the circles around her eyes were disagreeable to me—something left to desire in her would have made me love her the more—but because I feared lest, conscious of her momentarily lessened beauty, my looking at her should make her suffer.

"And here is the immense armchair, where we passed the

first hours, always so forced, of our liaison. Outside, it was a sad snowy afternoon; in us were mingled feelings of desire and calculation. But one day, two months later, when the first fire had spent itself, she uttered the profound truth at last—the occasion was a tactless remark with which she had offended me—which touched the very core of existence more decisively than all the words of love, and even than the first *tutoiment* on dying lips. A terrible utterance, which makes a solemn affair of a caprice, and transforms those between whom it passes. How can I recreate the impassioned tone, the vibrant voice with which she said, slipping into my arms, ‘In love, my dearest, there is no self-respect.’”

A saying of too strong a flavour, sensual as vice, and which, wrong from a creature of intoxicating finesse and grace, demoralizes all one’s being more than twenty years of debauchery. Under that apparent nobility of sincere feeling, what a vessel in which to drown all the dignity of a man and all his pride! Love teaches disinterestedness, it is true; but it cuts us off from the best as well as from the worst. Sad and bitter summing-up! The conventional order of things, crime, humiliation, physical imperfection, nothing more had any meaning for these two who henceforth knew nothing in the world outside of themselves. In the mass of laws which rule all human beings love takes the place of pledges; it interprets everything in its own terms and breaks the chains of honour in order to bind us together as accomplices.

These are the memories which the room where he had lived through all these sweet moments with Violante brought back to the young man. Thus the profound feeling and the taste for life, and without any repugnance for untrammelled desire, the freedom from all formalities, this is what these friendly objects gave back to him, these backgrounds to their love, on Christmas eve when things inanimate can speak to the soul.

Did he regret his beloved? Not at all. “For her to remain with us longer,” he said to himself, “would have been too much, for we were surfeited; she could not have given us any more. Whereas now, although she is absent, everything which we could drink in from her soul dwells on in

these things and in me. The millions of beings and things which today are dead, which make beautiful the forest, the going down of the sun, and the words of speech—each of these, having contributed its share to the enrichment of the universe, has nothing to do but die—and thus Violante has enriched us and left us.

"But Violante having enriched by herself the object of her love and these inanimate things has not yet played her rôle to its end. She has not yet expended all her vital force. Little unwearying seed, she has entrusted herself to the wind. She has gone to bear her soul across the sea."

At that moment he thought of the tokens which Violante had sent him from far distant countries—coffers filled with cold, mysterious trinkets, in which were placed kind thoughts of the traveller together with many tender memories. One by one he lifted out and handled the vases, the silks and the bronzes; vainly he essayed to surprise their secret, and make them to speak to him on this Christmas eve.

"Among the thousand of objects down there in the bazaars, Violante has chosen these. She has chosen them, as she chose me, and as we chose so many pleasures with common accord: but these strangers can tell me nothing. She went toward them, she understood them immediately and I do not understand them at all. Could it be possible that we were two beings living the same life, mingling our thoughts, so that even the most delicate nuances seemed gross and superfluous, and nevertheless her instincts sighed for things which for me had no meaning?" Then he recalled that sometimes she saw in her dreams grimacing forms, fantastic and terrible, which troubled her and which she would not treat as mere nightmares. She delighted in embroidering, in the beautiful garment in which her ardent spirit slumbered, dragons, unicorns, the phoenix, and the tortoise, which are the dream animals of the East. And descending further into the spirit of the exile, who often on summer evenings had tears of joy in her beautiful eyes, he recovered to memory the vibrating tones with which she used to describe with glowing words, the scent of roses, and death, in the narrow streets of London. Thus this woman and temptress,

formed to create life, loved all which made for disintegration, as if she would have joyed more in her beauty amongst dying things, and would rather have established her reign among the forces of decomposition.

All these wrappings filled the apartment with the decaying odour and the deadly fever which breathes from the grave.

"At this hour, doubtless," he dreamed, "in that country where decay is swiftest she has exhausted her nervous force and breathed away her entire soul. She has satisfied her boundless prodigality in lavishing upon these Chinese several aspects of her being with which I have never been able to come into contact. Perhaps too, as I may think without conceit, she has transmitted to them much that she has gathered from me. Her task is ended. According to her vow, this coffer appears before me as a sign of her death. I have not the strength to combat the blow which these events are giving me. Although we were near to each other during these years, our destinies were separate. I shall not grieve; there is already descending forgetfulness, the dust which effaces individual forms. I am rather disgusted to see that my feelings are like a thin string of curious pearls which dance on a loose thread. Well it was that we played music in this room! It raised for a paradise beyond time and space, where our desires, mingling at moments, gave us the illusion that our being was one."

And now, having seated himself at the piano in the first light of that sad Christmas morning the young man hummed the love song of Siegmund, thinking that perhaps in some hotel in the Orient she was choosing this night on which to die—this night when she knew that he was living over their past, and mingled with his grief at her death, the clear vision of the immutable ways of the world aroused in him a feeling of impotence and bitterness. Bitter distress to see how few were the grains loosened from the sand on the bank by the ripples set circling by the vessel which fell into the whirlpool of Thule.

THE RETURN

(*Le Retour*)

By CHARLES-LOUIS PHILIPPE

HE had waited till evening. At about a quarter to seven he knocked at the door. A voice, which he did not immediately recognise, called out—"Come in." Without having to grope for it, he found the latch in the old place, raised it, opened the door and entered.

His wife was not surprised. Each knock at the door, during the four years of his absence, had always made her think, "Perhaps that's he coming back." She had a soup-tureen on her lap and was holding a loaf against her breast; she was slicing bread for the soup with a motion that was very familiar to him. Without a word, she placed the tureen and the bread on a chair, then, lowering her head, she clutched at her apron and covered her face. He did not have to see her eyes to know that she was weeping.

He sat down, leaned against the back of his chair and not finding anything to say, looked the other way. He was utterly at a loss.

The three children were hanging over the table around the lamp. The two little ones, Lucien and Marguerite, were playing lotto. They saw that a man had come in; a man like all the rest who came and talked of things which did not interest children. They went on with their game. But Antoinette, the oldest, who by now was almost thirteen, and who was busy writing her lessons, her exercise-book wide open before her, recognized him almost immediately, despite his beard, and cried, "Oh! It's papa!"

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She had grown very much. She still had those little tricks on account of which he had loved to tease her, because she had always been so ready with some amusing rejoinder. She could not continue her work. She got up and, as he had his back turned, she placed her hand on his shoulder. He waited no longer, but looked around at her. She was not timid. She considered him triumphantly and said, "It's a long time since you have called me the fruit of your love!" She had always treasured that in her heart. When they had all lived together, he had hung around the inn all day long. He was a farrier by trade, but when a customer came to have a horse shod, his wife had to send Antoinette for her father. Whenever he saw the child coming for him among the drinkers, he would turn to his companions, saying, "Here's my daughter, gentlemen, my eldest daughter, the fruit of my love!" Each time this would make her furious.

He passed his hand over her hair, but did not dare to kiss her yet. Just at this moment the door opened at the push of a new arrival. Baptiste Pondet, a carpenter, came in with such assurance, that Larmineat understood everything without any explanations. He rose as one rises when the head of the house comes in, and said, "You see, it's me." Baptiste answered, "Sit down." Then he added, "I am like your wife; I always thought you would come back." Then as they were men, and men know life, they did not keep silent long. Larmineat said, "Do you think I have made a blunder?" Baptist Pondet explained in turn:

"Good Heavens! my good fellow. I—I've lost my wife."

"Ah! she's dead, that poor Adele."

"Yes, and I tell you it was all over quickly. It was an inflammation of the lungs, lasting three days. I had lost the habit of being alone. She's a good woman, your wife."

Larmineat answered:

"As for me, what do you want? I had so many debts and no work. I thought they didn't need a drunkard round the house. I left to get a job, I said—But I might have written to her."

"Yes, at the end of three months, she understood that you had left her. Well, everyone has his faults."

They were silent for a minute. They knew each other well, these two. They were of the same class, they had served together in the 36th Artillery, at Clermont-Ferrand. Larmingeat remembered it and said, "Who would have thought of this when we were in the army."

Such was the return of Larmingeat. Such were the words he said.

Tears cannot last forever. The woman lowered the apron with which she was covering her face, and then she took hold of the tureen and the bread to go to an adjoining room, which served as kitchen. Antoinette also, seeing that she did not understand what was going on in the room, ended by joining her.

The two men remained alone, facing each other, and Larmingeat said: "I see that it would have been better for me not to return."

Baptiste Pondet answered, "Well, all right, but you had to know what had happened to your wife and your children."

They were very kind to him, as he sat shifting restlessly about on his chair, and seeming anxious to take his leave, like a person who has no reason for staying. Baptiste Pondet said to him:

"But you will remain for supper with us?"

He accepted because he could not do anything else. He could not go to the inn, for this was his home town. His wife, Alexandrina, who had somewhat recovered her confidence, heard Baptiste and was of the same opinion. She put her head through the doorway, not to make any remark, but merely to observe that there was only some soup and cheese and that that was little enough. Baptiste was a good fellow. He declared that they ought to get some pork and a bottle of wine. Larmingeat, not wishing to be behind, brought out twenty sous. He insisted on paying for his bottle and said, that if there was any change, they should buy sweets for the children. Then he added for politeness' sake:

"I am putting you to some expense."

The children removed their lotto-game quickly when they learned that someone was dining with them. They were well pleased and wished to set the table. Alexandrine brought out a tablecloth which she placed on the table. Larmingeat objected, but she said, "Goodness, I have it; I may as well use it when there's company." When she returned with a small ham, some brawn, the two bottles and cakes, they began the meal. Larmingeat was very hungry. He avowed it without ceremony, and the few words he uttered were sufficient to set the conversation going.

They asked him how he managed things, where he slept, where he took his meals. It's true, he had not even told them that he came from Paris. He slept in a hotel. He ate in a restaurant. The hardest thing was to get someone to mend his clothes. He worked at the Metropolitan as the subway is called. He explained what the Metropolitan was. Baptiste said:

"Yes, they do all sorts of work."

They made a good meal of it. Langevin senior was no longer the pork-butcher, but his son's meat was very good also. The two bottles were used up. If Alexandrine had not said that she was not thirsty, there would not have remained enough wine for the cheese. Only one thing had been forgotten—cigars. But Larmingeat took out his purse once more, and gave ten sous to Antoinette, saying, "There, my child, get us two cigars." She was a charming child. She not only went willingly, but wanted her father to come with her; she would have walked him through the town. Her mother had to say to her, "Come on now, leave your father alone, and be careful not to tell the clerk that it's for him. No one has to know that he is here."

There was a fairly sad moment a little later when the children were being put to bed. It was easy enough with the little ones who were practically asleep at table. Larmingeat gave them two sous each, but they would not say, "Thank you, papa." They said, "Thank you, sir." When it was Antoinette's turn, she threw herself on her father. It seemed as if she had been quiet till then only to reserve her strength and to cry with more emotion. "I don't want him to go

away. I don't want him to go away." She clung to his neck. Her mother said, "Look now, you are hurting him."

They were obliged to pull her away by force, tear her from him and promise that he would not go away. Larmineat wept and Alexandrine and Baptiste wept with him. When she was gone, Baptiste said, "You saw that child? Well, there's not a better to be found. I have always been sorry that she is not mine."

When the children were in bed, everybody began to yawn; it was getting so late. All the cigars had been smoked. As there was not a drop to drink, they had nothing to do. Larmineat knew what he had to do. He said, "Well, I suppose I've got to go."

They did not keep him back. They merely asked him how he had come. He had come by train. He even told them that he had brought his valise along because at first he had wanted to stay. His wife said:

"Heavens, you should not have left the first time. What can you expect? I had to settle down. I cannot keep on marrying and unmarrying all the time. However, it turned out well."

There was a train at eleven. The station was six kilometers away and it would not do to be late as the train did not wait. Before he went, Baptiste, in one of those moments in which one sums up all that one has said, remarked:

"You see how things are with us? My furniture is here, there is one bed more than in your time."

He showed him the arrangement of the rooms. The landlord had made some repairs. He led him into the children's room. The walls had been papered and the chimney, which used to smoke, had been fixed. The children were tight asleep. Larmineat did not dare to kiss them, for fear of disturbing their sleep. He said, "I see that you are really comfortable."

He kissed Alexandrine before leaving, then as Baptiste stretched out his hand, he said, "Come, old fellow, let us kiss, too."

BIOGRAPHIES

ALEXANDRE DUMAS. (Called Dumas *père*, to distinguish him from his son.) Born at Villiers-Cotterets, July 24, 1802. He was the grandson of the Marquis Alexandre Davy de la Pailleterie and a negress. His father, Alexandre Davy de la Pailleterie Dumas, was for a time a general under Napoleon. Dumas studied law and was apprenticed to a notary of Soissons. Later he worked as secretary in the household of the future king, Louis-Philippe. He became engaged, as a Republican, in the Revolution of 1830, and resigned his post from the royal household. At this time he began writing his historical novels, and his name appears on the title-page of 298 volumes, including short stories, romances and plays. He had many literary assistants, and ran a sort of a fiction factory. His best work was done between 1843 and 1850. His son rescued him from poverty in his old age, and he died at Puys, near Dieppe, December 5, 1870. He was buried in 1872 at Villiers-Cotterets.

Most famous among his many books are "La Reine Margot," "Les Trois Mousquetaires," "Vingt Ans Après," "Le Vicomte de Bragelonne," and "Monte Cristo."

ALFRED DE VIGNY. (Alfred Victor, Comte de Vigny.) Born at Loche, Indre-et-Loire, 1799. He was educated in Paris and served for twelve years in the army, resigning in 1828. His first two books of poems, published between 1822 and 1826, were philosophic epics. In 1826 his famous historical novel, "Cinq-Mars," was issued; and in 1835 his "Servitude et Grandeur Militaires" (from which the story in this volume is taken) appeared. His last days were passed in solitude. He died in Paris in 1863.

Besides the books already mentioned he wrote "Les Destinées" (1864), "Stello" (1832), "Journal d'un Poète

(1867), and several plays, of which "Chatterton" (1835) was the best.

✱ **ALFRED DE MUSSET.** (Alfred Louis Charles de Musset.) Born at Paris, November 11, 1810. Graduated with honours at the Collège Henri Quatre. He met and loved George Sand in 1833, accompanying her to Italy as her secretary. This event was the crisis of his life. He returned to Paris in 1835 with a broken heart. In 1838, through the influence of the Duc d'Orléans, he received a post of Librarian. His last years were inactive and marked by mental depression. He died of heart disease at Paris, May 2, 1857.

His principal works in poetry are: "Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie" (1830), "Rolla" (1833), and "Les Nuits" (1835-1837); in drama: "Caprices de Marianne" (1833), "Lorenzaccio, Fantasio" (1834), "Le Chandelier" (1835), and "Il ne Faut Jurer de Rien" (1836); in fiction: "Confession d'un Jeune Homme du Siècle" (1836), "Contes" (1837-1844), and "La Mouche" (1853).

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER. Born at Tarbes, August 31, 1811. Was educated in Paris, and became a painter. In 1836 he became a newspaper critic, in which field he wielded great influence. He was an extensive traveller and wrote several volumes of travel sketches. His earlier creative work was in the main poetry, but later he adopted prose. He was very prolific and tried his hand as various types of literature. His name appeared to several hundred volumes. He died in Paris, October 23, 1872.

His principal works, aside from his volumes of criticism and travel sketches, are: "Poésies" (1830), "Albertus" (1832), "Comédie de la Mort" (1838), and "Émaux et Camées" (1853), "Les Jeunes France" (1833), "Mademoiselle de Maupin" (1835), "Fortunio" (1838), "Roman de la Momie" (1856), "Capitaine Fracasse" (1861-1863), and "Spirite" (1866).

GEORGE SAND. (Armantine Lucille Aurore, Baroness Dudevant.) Born in Paris, July 5, 1804, the daughter of

Maurice Dupin, an army officer who was the grandson of Marshall Saxe, the illegitimate son of Augustus II, King of Poland. She was educated in a Parisian convent, and in 1822 married Casimir Dudevant, a country squire, with whom she lived for eight years, and had two children. A partial separation from her husband came in 1831, and it was made final in 1836. In Paris she was an intimate friend of Musset, Chopin, Balzac, Liszt and Delacroix. She died in 1876.

Among her 107 volumes of fiction, correspondence, memoirs and dramas, the principal are: "Indiana" (1832), "Valentine" (1832), "Lelia" (1833), "Jacques" (1834), "André" (1835), "Leone Leoni" (1835), "Mauprat" (1836), "Spiridion" (1838), "Horace" (1842), "Consuelo" (1842), "Comtesse de Rudolstadt" (1843), "Pêche de M. Antoine" (1847), "Jeanne" (1844), "Mare au Diable" (1846), "Teverino" (1848), "La Petite Fadette" (1848), "François le Champi" (1850), "Les Maîtres Sonneurs" (1852), "Mlle. de la Quintinie" (1863), "Confession d'une Jeune Fille" (1865), and "Mlle. de Merquem" (1870).

HONORÉ DE BALZAC. Born at Tours, May 16, 1799. Studied law but refused to practise, and devoted his entire time to literature. Throughout his life he was harassed by poverty and depressed by debts. He married Madame Eveline Hanska, a Polish lady, three months before his death. He died in Paris, August 18, 1850, at the height of his fame, with his stupendous conception, the "Comédie Humaine" unfinished; and was buried in Père Lachaise.

So great was Balzac's work, so much importance attaches to nearly everything he wrote, and so interdependent were all of his novels and stories, that it is difficult and unfair to make a selection of his books. The following, however, may be mentioned as among his best: "Eugénie Grandet," "Un Ménage de Garçon," "Illusions Perdues," "Père Goriot," "Cousin Bette," and "Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes."

PROSPER MÉRIMÉE. Born in Paris, September 28, 1803. Studied law and held various civil service offices. In 1831 he became inspector of archaeological and historical monuments of France; in 1834, an Academician; and in 1853, a Senator of the Empire. He died at Cannes, September 23, 1870.

His principal works are: "Théâtre of Clara Gazul" (1825), "La Guzla" (1826), "La Jacquerie" (1822), "Le Chronique de Charles IX" (1829), and many short stories, the principal among which being "La Vénus d'Ille," "Tamango," "Carmen," "Colomba," and "Mattéo Falcone."

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT. Born in Rouen, 1821. He had a violent love affair with a woman whom he depicted in the character of "Madame Arrieux," and later a strong platonic friendship with Madame Colet—both events having considerable influence on his life and outlook. He disliked people in general to such an extent that he lived the life of a recluse. He was afflicted with a disease which resembled epilepsy, but worked unremittingly with an almost morbid concentration. He was an intimate of the Goncourts, and was a kind of godfather to Maupassant. He died in 1880.

Despite Flaubert's enormous labours he published but little. "Madame Bovary," "L'Éducation Sentimentale," "La Tentation de Saint-Antoine," a volume of three short stories of which "Hérodias" is the best, and "Bouvard et Pécuchet" (unfinished at his death) represent practically his entire production.

JORIS-KARL HUYSMANS. Born in Paris in 1848, of a Flemish family in which there had been several distinguished seventeenth-century painters. At one time he retreated to a Trappist monastery, becoming an unprofessed member of the Benedictine Community at Liguegé. His later books are filled with religious mysticism. He died in 1907.

His principal works are "Marthe," "Les Sœurs Vatard," "En Ménage," "Là-Bas," "La Cathédral," "L'Oblat," and "En Route."

ÉMILE ZOLA. Born in Paris, April 2, 1840. His father was a Venetian. He studied at the Lycée Saint-Louis, entered the publishing house of Hachette in 1862, and launched into journalism. In 1898 he interested himself in the Dreyfus case, as a result of which he was twice convicted of libelling the military authorities. He fled to England to escape the sentence of six months which was imposed upon him, but an amnesty in 1899 made it possible for him to return to France. Zola died on September 29, 1902, accidentally suffocated by gas. In 1908 his remains were transferred to the Pantheon.

Zola's greatest work was his "Rougon-Marquart" series of novels which he called the "Psychological History of a Family Under the Second Empire." Between 1894 and 1898 he published the "Three Cities" series—"*Lourdes*," "*Rome*," and "*Paris*." Later he began his "Four Gospels" series, only three of which were finished at his death—"Fécondité," "*Travail*" and "*Vérité*." "*Justice*" was the title of the fourth.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT. (Henri Revé Albert Guy de Maupassant.) Born at the Château of Miromesnie (Seine-Inférieure) on August 5, 1850. He served as clerk in the Navy Department, and later as a soldier in the Franco-Prussian War. He fell under the influence of Flaubert (who was not, as is often stated, related to him), and devoted his life to literature. From 1887 onward traces of insanity began to appear in his work. In 1892 he became wholly insane, and died in an asylum at Passy on July 6, 1893.

Maupassant wrote about 200 short stories which appeared in book form between 1881 and 1890. He also wrote six novels—"Une Vie," "*Bel-Ami*," "*Mont Oriol*," "*Pierre et Jean*," "*Fort Comme la Morte*," "*Notre Coeur*"—and several travel volumes.

ALPHONSE DAUDET. Born at Nîmes in 1840. He held a sinecure secretaryship on the Duc de Morny's staff from 1861 to 1865, and at the age of twenty-seven married Mlle. Julia Allard. In his youth he lived for a time at Lyons,

but later went to Paris and threw himself into the Bohemian literary life of that city. He died at Paris in 1897.

His principal works are his three volumes of *Tartarin* stories, published in 1872, 1886 and 1890; "Jack" (1876), "La Nabob" (1877), "Les Rois en Exil" (1879), "Roumestan" (1881), "Sapho" (1884), and two volumes of short stories—"Lettres de Mon Moulin" and "Contes du Lundi." From "Lettres de Mon Moulin" is taken the story appearing in this volume.

FRANÇOIS COPPÉE. (François Édouard Joachim Coppée.) Born in Paris in 1842. For a time he was a clerk in the government service, but he gave up his post for literature and in 1869 became a member of the Parnassian School. He was dramatic critic of *La Patrie* from 1880 to 1884, and was elected to the French Academy in the latter year. He died in 1908.

He published many volumes of poetry between 1886 and 1901. He also wrote several plays, several volumes of prose tales and novels, and a series of journalistic essays. His prose tales of the eighties include "Fille de Tristesse," "Henriette," "Madame Nunu," and "Le Couché de Soleil." His novels are "La Coupable" and "La Bonne Souffrance," the latter of which records his reconciliation with the Church.

CATULLE MENDÈS. Born in Bordeaux, 1841. In 1859 he founded the *Revue Fantaisiste*, the organ of the Parnassians. In 1866 he married Judith Gautier; but shortly afterward they were separated. He died in 1909.

His best known novels are "Histoires d'Amour" (1868), "Le Roi Vierge" (1880), "Mephistophela" (1890), and "Gog" (1896). He wrote numerous plays and librettos, and three books of criticism.

PAUL BOURGET. Born at Amiens, September 2, 1852. His father was Russian, and his mother English. He was educated at the Collège de Sainte-Barbe, and began his literary career as a journalist. He was elected to the French Academy in 1894.

Bourget has written many volumes of poetry, criticism, and travel. Among his principal works of fiction are "Cruelle Énigme" (1885), "Un Crime d'Amour" (1886), "André Cornélius" (1887), "Mensonges" (1887), "Le Disciple" (1889), "La Terre Promise" (1892), "Cosmopolis" (1892), "Un Scruple" (1893), "Le Fantome" (1901), "L'Étape" (1902), "Monique" (1902), "Un Divorce" (1904), and "L'Émigré" (1907).

MAURICE BARRÈS. Born at Charmes-sur-Moselle, 1862. He entered journalistic work in 1883. In 1906 he was elected to the Academy, and in the same year he was reëlected to the Chamber of Deputies, of which he had been a member since 1889.

Besides several volumes of essays Barrès' works included the following volumes of fiction: "Sous l'Oeil des Barbares" (1888), "Un Homme Libre" (1889), "Le Jardin de Bérénice" (1890), "Les Déracinés" (1897), "L'Appel au Soldat" (1900), "Leurs Figures" (1902), and "Collette Baudoche" (1908).

MARCEL PRÉVOST. (Eugène Marcel Prévost.) Born at Paris, May 1, 1862. He was educated at the Polytechnic School by the Jesuits, then became a tobacco manufacturer, and in 1891 entered upon the literary field. He was elected to the French Academy in 1909.

His published works include: "Lettres des Femmes" (1892), "Nouvelles Lettres des Femmes" (1893), "L'Autonne d'une Femme" (1893), "Demi-vierges" (1894), "Le Jardin Secret" (1897), "Les Vierges Fortes" (1900), "Lettres à Française" (1902), "La Princesse d'Erminge" (1905), "M. et Mme. Moloch" (1906), "Lettres à Française Mariée" (1908), "Pierre et Thérèse" (1909), "Missette" (1911), and "Lettres à Française Mama" (1912).

ANATOLE FRANCE. (Jacques Anatole Thibault.) Born in 1844. He was a courageous defender of Dreyfus and championed socialism in his book "Opinions Socialistes" (1902). In 1896 he was elected to the Academy.

His principal works are: "Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard" (1881), "Thaïs" (1890), "Les Opinions de Jérôme Cogniard" (1893), "Le Lys Rouge" (1894), "Balthassar" (1899), "La Révolte des Anges" (1914), and "L'Étui de Nacre," from which the story in the present volume was chosen.

PIERRE LOTI. (Louis Marie Julien Viaud.) Born at Rochefort, January 14, 1850, of Huguenot ancestry. In 1867 he entered the Marine Service and resigned in 1898 with lieutenant's rank. He was elected to the Academy in 1891.

Loti's chief works are "Aziyade" (1879), "Le Mariage de Loti" (1880), "Roman d'un Spahi" (1881), "Mon Frère Ives" (1883), "Les Trois Dames de la Kasbah" (1884), "Le Pecheur d'Islande" (1886), "Madame Chrysanthème" (1887), "Au Maroc" (1890), "Le Livre de la Pitié et de la Mort," from which the sketch in this book was taken, (1891), "Le Desert" (1895), "La Galilee" (1895), "Ramuntcho" (1897), "Matelot" (1898), "Les Derniers Jours de Pekin" (1901), "L'Inde" (1903), "Vers Ispahan" (1903), "La Troisième Jeunesse de Mme. Prune" (1905), "Les Désenchantées" (1906), "La Mort de Philae" (1908), "La Peléran d'Angkor" (1912), "The Daughter of Heaven," in collaboration with Judith Gautier (1913), "On Life's Byways" (1914), and "War" (1917).

CHARLES LOUIS-PHILIPPE. Born in 1875 of a family of nomadic beggars. He was educated at the Polytechnic School, confining himself to the study of mathematics. Later he gave his entire time to writing. His career was cut short by his premature death in 1909.

His principal works include "La Mère et l'Enfant," "Bubu de Montparnasse," "Père Perdrix," "Marie Donadieu," "Croquignole," "Charles Blanchard," and "Dans le Petit Ville," from the last of which was taken the story which appears in the present volume.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

It is not until one goes seriously on the search for good English translations of standard foreign literature that the paucity of such books is revealed. Adequate editions of the best French writers are especially rare, and the result is that America knows French literature largely through poor versions which fall far short of doing justice to the originals. Many eminent writers of France have not been translated at all; some have appeared only in abridged and incompetent English editions; and others, whose works were well translated years ago, are not now available to American readers because of their books having long been out of print.

In the following list it has not been my purpose to set down a complete bibliography of all the good books at present obtainable. Rather have I sought to be suggestive; and with that object in view I have indicated only the more important of the French translations issued by American publishing houses, in view to helping the reader to a selection. Most of the books listed are in print: the others are occasionally to be found on the market.

In the case of Dumas' works the translation is not of the foremost importance. Their contents represent the primary interest. Therefore it is safe to buy any Dumas novel which bears the imprint of a reputable and established firm. Little, Brown & Co., for instance, publish an edition in forty-nine volumes; and many of the best Dumas novels are to be found in Crowell's "Pocket Library."

Alfred de Vigny has almost entirely escaped translation into English. His "Cinq-Mars" was once issued by Little, Brown & Co., and it may still be found in the second-hand book stores.

Alfred de Musset has suffered the same fate as Vigny. Barrie published an edition of his "Confessions of a Child of the Century," translated by T. F. Rogerson; and several

cheap editions have since appeared. But Brentano's "Tales" by Musset, including the story reprinted in this volume, is the most representative volume of this author's in English. It contains several of his best stories, and they are well translated.

Théophile Gautier, on the other hand, possesses a complete English edition, published by Little, Brown & Co., in seventeen volumes. Ten of these volumes are devoted to Gautier's romances, and the other seven to his "Travels"—in reality making two sets, for it is possible to buy the ten volumes of romances without the seven travel volumes, and *vice versa*. The translation is by F. C. de Sumichrast, professor of French at Harvard University; and he has done his task with painstaking care, with a fine sense of values for Gautier's gifts, and with a striking capacity for writing fluent English. Brentano, also, has what is perhaps the finest small collection of Gautier stories in English—"One of Cleopatra's Nights," done into beautiful diction by Lafcadio Hearn. Another excellent single-volume collection is Putnam's "Gautier" in the "Little French Masterpieces" series, translated by George Burnham Ives.

There was once a very good translation of George Sand's novels, published by Little, Brown & Co., but they are now out of print and can be found only in the second-hand stores.

One of the greatest shortcomings in American publishing is the absence of any first-class and complete edition of Balzac. The Saintsbury edition is expurgated and incompetent; and the so-called Wormeley edition is, if anything, worse. The only set of Balzac which can be recommended is the subscription edition published by Barrie. It is by far the best in English. (The set bearing the imprint of Gebbie is the same as the Saintsbury edition with Dutton's on Dent's imprint.)

Innumerable translations of some of Mérimée's works (especially "Carmen" and "Colomba") have appeared in English, but a really excellent complete edition is yet to appear. The set issued by Frank S. Holby is not particularly good, but some of Mérimée's shorter writings, adequately translated, are to be found in Putnam's "Little French Master-

pieces" series, and in "Stories" (Dutton's "World's Story Tellers Series").

Flaubert is extremely difficult to translate, but nevertheless there are adequate English versions of his more important works. Henry James once translated "Madame Bovary" and it is well to try to get this book, although it is now out of print. Then there is another translation, which will answer purposes of study, in the "Modern Library." "Salambô" has been translated several times, but the one bearing the name of M. French Sheldon and originally published by Lovell, Coryell & Co., is perhaps the best. "The Temptation of Saint Anthony" was translated by Lafcadio Hearn and issued several years ago by the Alice Harriman Publishing Co. This is by all means the volume one should try to get. The three short stories by Flaubert, translated by George Burnham Ives and issued by Putnams in their "Little French Masterpieces" series, are wholly adequate.

In buying Zola translations it is always well to demand the excellent Vizetelly edition. These books are authoritative and the best of their kind available. Not all of them have American imprints, but they may be had, nevertheless, in their country. The Marion Co. have issued "Abbé Mouret's Confession," "The Dramshop," "The Fat and the Thin," "His Masterpiece," and "The Joy of Life;" and Macmillans have issued "Doctor Pascal" and "The Downfall."

There are many translations of Daudet in English, and "Sapho" has appeared in numerous editions. In buying Daudet, however, one should be guided by the publisher's imprint. Look always for the name of a reliable house. Little, Brown & Co. put out an adequate set. "Letters from My Will" and "Monday Tales" (representing Daudet's best short stories) are issued in Putnam's "Little French Masterpieces" series.

Maupassant has suffered at the hands of translators more than any other French writer of note, and the vast majority of the American editions of Maupassant are practically worthless. The best, though unfortunately not complete, edition is published by P. F. Collier & Sons in ten volumes. Then there are two volumes of stories issued by Harpers—"The

Odd Number" and "The Second Odd Number"—which are wholly excellent. One has an introduction by Henry James, the other an introduction by William Dean Howells. Also there is a first-rate small collection of stories in Putnam's "Little French Masterpieces" series.

The works of Huysmans have never been issued in America. One or two of his later novels, which are not his best, were translated and published in England; but, aside from these, there is none of this writer's work available in English.

The only representative collection of Coppée's stories in English is published by Harper & Bros. in their "Odd Number" series—"Tales by Coppée." The book is well translated and, in its limited way, answers every purpose. "The Guilty Man," translated by Ruth Helen Davis, was published by Dillingham in 1912.

Catulle Mendès has been wholly neglected in English, and the United States Catalogue records not a single translation of any one of his books. Stories have appeared here and there in magazines, but, so far as I can find out, no book has appeared.

Anatole France, however, has been done into English with a greater thoroughness and competency than has any other modern French writer. John Lane Co. publish a complete edition, capably translated and beautifully bound. Also "The Red Lily" and "The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard" appear in the "Modern Library," the latter translated by Lafcadio Hearn.

No complete edition of Pierre Loti has appeared in English, but several of his best works are available in good translations. "The Book of Pity and of Death," translated by T. P. O'Connor, was published by Cassell, and copies of it may still be found. The Macmillans issued "Carman Sylva, and Sketches from the Orient," "On Life's Byways" (both translated by Fred Rothwell), and "Disenchanted" (translated by Clara Bell). McClurg issued "The Island Fisherman" (translated by A. F. de Koven); and Dutton issued "Madame Chrysanthème" (translated by L. Ensor).

The best translations of Bourget are on the Scribner list.